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FOUR

SERMONS,

DELIVERED AT CAVENDISH, VT.

ON THE

DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS MISERY.

BY WARREN SKINNER.

WOODSTOCK, VT.
E. AVERY, *PRINTER*
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1513
1513-2

SERMON.—*No.* 1.

UNREASONABLENESS OF THE DOCTRINE.

LUKE XII. 57....“Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right.”

THE sentiment that God will punish a portion of his intelligent offspring without mercy and without end, has long and extensively prevailed in the christian world; and, indeed, at the present day, it is considered by many one of the fundamental and essential doctrines of the gospel. Such is the veneration in which this principle is held by many professing christians, that a denial of it is considered a denial of the scriptures; and any attempt to refute, or do it away from the minds of men, are looked on as so many attempts to sap the foundation of Christianity, and to overthrow the whole superstructure.

That this principle of doctrine should have found its way into the church, in company with the mass of other corruptions, which were introduced from the philosophy of the ancients, and the theology of the pagans; and that it should have been retained as a constituent principle of Christianity during the continuance of the dark ages, is not at all surprising. But, that christians, in the present enlightened age of the world, should continue to adhere to it with such unyielding pertinacity, would be matter of real astonishment, were not one other circumstance taken into consideration. When the arm of civil power was extended for the protection of the church, and *for the* propagation of that religion which *was established* in the world in opposition to

worldly power and wisdom, an unwarran
degree of authority was conferred on the cl
who never could be accused of neglectin
means of increasing this authority, and re
ing it permanent. For this purpose, the de
ing principle, that, in the concerns of reli
reason should be wholly disregarded, an
clearest dictates rejected, was introduced.
strenuously urged upon the people at large

Although, at the present day, but very fe
be found, who will openly advocate and d
this principle in its full extent; yet the infl
of it on the minds of many is plainly discove
To what but this shall we attribute the repug
which is so often seen, to reason on the s
of religion? When we urge the unreasonabl
of some particular point or principle of doc
we are often met with the assertion that h
reason is depraved,—that it is an unsafe
and we must be cautious how we use it, or
ourselves to its influence. On all other su
but religion, men are generally disposed
reasonable beings; and the more importa
subject, the more carefully and closely the
reason. But on this, the most important
subjects which can engage the attention
tional beings; and one which requires th
full and dispassionate use of reason, the
many who seem resolved entirely to set it
and to disregard its plainest dictates. Son
even go so far as to attempt a justificat
this course of conduct; and will introd
train of arguments, and a variety of reas
convince you that they are right in rej
reason. Thus, to borrow the pertinent lan
of another, they will "reason against reaso
reason against the use of reason, and offer
good reason why reason is good for nothing.

But while some reject the proper use of re

the affairs of religion, there are others who run into the opposite extreme; and reject every thing which is not completely within the reach, or comprehension of their reason. This is a fruitful source of skepticism and infidelity, as will be more fully seen when I come to speak more particularly of the proper use and office of reason in the affairs of revelation and religion. There are many things above the perfect comprehension of reason; and yet we know they exist. We cannot tell in what manner inert and unconscious matter could be so organized as to constitute our own living and sensitive bodies;—how from it the beating heart and heaving lungs could be formed; or how it could be converted into that vital fluid which circulates with such rapidity and regularity through the whole human system. Yet of all this we are perfectly conscious; we know it is so; and we are satisfied beyond a rational doubt, of the existence of a great First Cause, sufficiently wise and powerful to produce all these effects. In order therefore, to be consistent, the skeptic should either contend with some visionary philosophers, that there is no such thing as matter, or a material universe in existence; because his reason cannot point out the manner in which they exist; or else admit that God may make a revelation of an existence to man hereafter, and of circumstances attending that existence which are above the comprehensions of his reason.

In order that the subject may be clearly understood, let us inquire in the first place, what is reason? In answering this question, it will not, I presume, be considered improper to introduce the definition given of it by the learned Mr. Locke. He says it is "that faculty whereby man is supposed to be distinguished from beasts, *and wherein* it is evident he supasses them."—

Reason, in its operations is fourfold. "The first and highest" degree of it "is the discovering and finding out of truths; the second, the regular and methodical disposition of them; the third is, the perceiving their connexion; and the fourth, making a right conclusion" from them. The first and great object of reason is to discover truth. This it attempts to accomplish by a careful examination and comparison of things and principles which are known to exist,—by following causes to the various effects which they are capable of producing; or by searching out these causes, from the effects which obviously have been produced. In this manner, many important and useful truths are brought to light;—many of the operations and phenomena of nature are discovered and satisfactorily explained; and in this manner we are enabled to "look through nature, up to nature's God." But thers is a point beyond which human reason cannot go; and although it teaches us that there must be an infinite First Cause of all thiugs, yet it can tell us nothing of his character, or of his purpose in giving us existence. There are other important and interesting questions which it cannot solve; whether we shall exist beyond the grave; and if so, what will be our constitutions in eternity, are inquiries beyond its reach. Hence, in order to answer these questions satisfactorily, revelation becomes indespensable. But how are we to satisfy ourselves that such a revelation has been given us? or admitting it has been given, how are we to ascertain the truths it contains, but by the aid of reason? In short, why are the Holy scriptures any more a revelation to man than the beasts of the field, if it be not on the ground that man is capable by his reason of understanding them?

We may now notice the connexion subsisting *between reason* and revelation; and also t

proper office of reason in the concerns of religion Revelation is addressed to reasonable beings; its principles and requirements are all reasonable; and it is only through the medium of reason, that we are convinced the scriptures contain a revelation from God to man. Hence, as the justly celebrated writer already mentioned observes, "Reason is natural *revelation*, whereby the Eternal Father of light, and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties; *revelation* is natural *reason* enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they came from God. So that he who takes away *reason*, to make way for *revelation*, puts out the light of both; and does much the same, as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the light of an invisible star by a telescope."

Our senses are the inlets of all our knowledge. By them we discover the existence of objects without ourselves. But it is reason which arranges these objects with regularity in our minds, and perfects that which was only begun by the operations of sense. Hence every thing which is placed by our bountiful Creator within the scope of human ability, is siezed upon by the senses, and converted to useful purposes by the instrumentality of reason. There are some truths so plain and obvious, either to our powers of perception, or faculties of judgement, that we can no more doubt them than we can our own existence; and consequently we can never admit as true, any principle which contradicts, or denies them. Of this sort are those propositions which assert that no effect can exist without a *cause adequate* to its productions,—that no organ-

ization can exist without an organizer,—th there can be no law, either moral or physic without a lawgiver, and that no effect can .possi bly exceed its cause. From these clear and ol vious principles we irresistibly infer the exi tence of a Supreme intelligent Being, who is th first cause of all things. Any proposition, there fore, which denies the infinite wisdom, or th Almighty power of God, we must reject as un true. We have also, in the profuse bounties o his providence, an equally convincing evidenc of his infinite and impartial goodness; and con sequently any thing which denies this must also b rejected. Admitting these propositions, reason wil teach us, 1. That it is possible for him who consti tuted the mind of man to enlighten it by revela tion. 2. That, as a revelation which points out a immortal existence to man beyond the grave will increase his happiness; and as God is infi nitely good, it is consistent with his character and therefore probable that he would make suc revelation. 3. That such revelation, coming from him, cannot possibly contradict any princi ple which he has imparted to us as undeniable truth, through any other medium.

From what has been said, we are able to dis cover, not only the nature of human reason, bu also its office in the affairs of revealed religion or truth. But we should not infer from hence, that we are to reject every thing in revelatio which does not come perfectly within the scope of reason. It has already been observed tha there are many things which we know, or ac knowledge to be true, which are above the per fect comprehension of reason. The object o revelation, as has been shown, is to make new discoveries to the mind, which reason could not *reach, but* which it vouches for as true, by con *vincing* us they are from God, If therefore, w

were to reject every thing in revelation which our reason could not completely comprehend, it would become altogether useles, and the end for which it was given to us, would be entirely subverted.

That man is capable of exercising his reason to advantage, and that it is his duty thus to exercise it, in the important concerns of religion, is obvious from the language of the text, as well as from other scriptures. Our Saviour calls on those he addresses to judge of themselves; 'what is right." Now if we adopt the supposition that man is destitute of the natural or moral ability of judging correctly, we must consider our Lord as extremely arbitrary and unreasonable in his requirements; in fact, we must consider him as requireing contrary to his own instructions concerning the requisitions of God on his creatures. In the chapter from which our text is selected, Christ plainly teaches us that no more is required of us than we are able to perform; and that we shall be guilty in the sight of God in proportion to our neglect of known duties. "That servant," says he, "which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." God himself, by the prophet, calls on us in a plain and explicit manner to exercise our reason, and promises us great blessings in doing it. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—But, I need not multiply quotations to prove the propriety and *reasonableness* of reasoning on this *subject. I shall,* therefore proceed directly to

the main object of this discourse, which is to show the unreasonableness of the doctrine of endless punishment.

In the discussion of the subject before us, there are certain principles which I shall assume as true, as they are admitted and urged by christians of all denominations. 1. That God has established a moral government in the world—2. That men are the subjects of this government; and 3. That as subjects, all men are accountable to him for their conduct. With these principles constantly in view, the sentiment that God will punish men for their disobedience and their sins is perfectly reasonable; it is in accordance with all our ideas of right and justice. The question then before us, is not whether it is reasonable, just and right for God to punish his disobedient children; but whether it is reasonable to suppose he will do it without mercy, and without end.

The only ground on which the advocates for the doctrine of endless punishment have heretofore attempted to support this principle from reason, is that of the infinity of sin. Sin, they say, is an infinite evil: and consequently deserves an infinite, or endless punishment. This sentiment is clearly expressed by the Westminster Assembly of divines, in the following question and answer,—"What does every sin deserve? Every Sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come." Now if the infinity of sin can be established as a truth, then I admit the doctrine of endless punishment would flow from it as a natural and reasonable consequence; but on the other hand, if this principle cannot be established; and if on the contrary it can be shown that sin is finite and limited in its nature, all the support which the doctrine can derive from reason is at once taken away. Sin, it is acknowledged by

all, is the act of a finite being; and as no one ever thought of attributing infinity to any other act of man, we might rationally conclude that this, as well as all his other acts was finite.—But such is the fondness of man for his own peculiar opinions, and such his anxiety to maintain them, that the clearest dictates of reason are often overlooked; and such I conceive to be the case in reference to the subject under consideration. Let us now examine the different grounds on which the advocates for the doctrine of the infinity of sin have attempted to support their systems.

1. Sin, it is contended, is infinite, because committed against an infinite God. The greater the being sinned against, and the more perfect the authority opposed by sin, the greater will be the crime. As therefore, God is infinite in all his perfections, and as his authority over man is also infinite, sin, being against this God, and in opposition to his authority, must consequently be infinite. This argument certainly appears somewhat plausible at first view; but let us examine it—let us bring it to the test of reason and see if it be not more specious than solid. Suppose this principle were to be adopted in the jurisprudence of our country, or carried into practice in the government of families.—What would be the consequences which would follow? Surely they would be such as to cause all the better feelings of the heart to revolt against them. In all civil governments, the authority delegated to rulers and magistrates by the constitution of the country, extends equally over all the subjects or citizens. But, I ask, are all these subjects or citizens alike guilty in the view of the law for opposing this authority?—This will not be contended for by any man in his right mind. On the contrary, all governments, even the most despotic, make a wide difference

in the criminality of the different individuals who may violate their laws: and while they would punish with death the man, who, in the perfect exercise of reason, should deliberately commit murder; the idiot, or the insane person who should commit the same act, would be screened from all punishment. Now if the degree of criminality which is to be attached to the actions of mankind, is to be determined by the dignity of the person or authority which is opposed by these actions, all such distinctions must forever cease; the idiot, or the insane man deserves just the same punishment for the same act, as the man who is perfectly sane; and the infant a week old should be punished with the same severity for disobeying a parent, as the child of ten years. The truth is, the degree of criminality attached to every act is determined by the actor's knowledge of right and wrong, and by the amount of injury received by the person against whom the act is directed; and not by the dignity or the authority of the person sinned against.—This principle as I have already shown is recognized in all governments; it is adopted and put in practice in every family; and were it to be overlooked, or a departure from it tolerated, the most unnatural and horrid consequences would be the result.

2. It has been argued that sin must be infinite because it is the opposite of holiness. Holiness it is said, is an infinite attribute of God; it is not capable of being divided into parts, sin is opposed to the holiness of God; not to any particular part, as there are no parts, but to the entire and perfect holiness of God; therefore it must be as infinite as the holiness itself; and so, evidently becomes at once, an infinite evil.

Without stopping to inquire whether holiness *is, strickly* speaking, a single and distinct attribute of God; or whether it is not, on the oth

hand, a principle which attaches equality to all his attributes and perfections, which I am, for myself, satisfied is the fact; let us briefly examine the premises laid down, and the conclusion drawn from them. In order that the subject may be fully and clearly before us, I will take the liberty to lay down similar premises, and draw like conclusions from them. Wisdom and power are infinite attributes of Deity, and are incapable of being divided into parts. Folly and weakness, being the opposites of wisdom and power, are opposed to these infinite attributes of God; not to particular parts of them, for there can be no such, but to the whole and entire wisdom and power of the Most High, therefore they must be as infinite as the wisdom and power themselves; and so, evidently become at once, infinite evils. Every one must readily discover the futility and impropriety of such reasoning as this; all must fell sensible of the absurdity of speaking of infinite weaknes, or infinite folly; and yet by the same process of reasoning, which proves sin infinite, on the ground I am now examining, we must prove the infinity of folly and weakness.

But, I shall perhaps be met here with the assertion that weakness, and folly are mere negative qualities or principles, being nothing but a a lack of power and wisdom. Let us then notice some other of the attributes of our heavenly Father. Love, truth, knowledge, justice and mercy are also attributes belonging to him; the opposites of which are hatred, falsehood, ignorance, injustice and cruelty. Will any one contend that either of these, as they exist or operate in man is infinite? Certainly not; and yet there is the same reason for considering them in this light, as they are the opposites of the attributes of God, as there is on this ground for ascribing infinity to sin. But, says

the opposer, the objection founded on the negative quality of weakness and folly, has not been removed, but rather strengthened by the remarks last made; as it will be contended that hatred, falsehood, ignorance, injustice and cruelty, are only the want of love, truth, knowledge, justice and mercy. Very well. Prove then that sin is any thing but the want of holiness; or cease to urge its infinity from the fact that it is the opposite of God's holiness.

3. The infinity of sin has been urged on the ground of its being the transgression of an infinite law. As "sin is the transgression of the law;" if it can be proved that the law which has been given to man for the government of his conduct, is an infinite law; then, I acknowledge, the question is forever settled; and the infinity of sin must be admitted as an incontrovertible truth. On the contrary, if it can be clearly shown that the law which man violates by his transgression is finite, by a parity of reasoning it will follow conclusively that sin is also finite. But what are the arguments brought in sup ort of the position that the law of God which man violates by transgression is an infinite law? The only one which I have ever heard adduced on this point is, that this law proceeded from an infinite lawgiver. This argument, if it may be called an argument, by proving altogether too much, defeats itself. For if we contend that this law must necessarily be infinite, because it proceeded from God; then, in order to be consistent, we must admit that every being, and every thing which has proceeded from him is infinite; that we ourselves, as we owe our existence and every thing we have and are to him, are infinite beings; and not only ourselves, but every insect in the dust, yea, and every plant and shrub which springs from the earth is also infinite; which would amount very nearly to an infinite absurdity.

This is not the only, nor the greatest difficulty attendant on the supposition of the infinity of the law. We may rationally inquire if finite beings can be justly amenable to an infinite law? Reason will at once answer this question in the negative. The law of God is a reasonable law; it is addressed to moral beings, who are supposed to be capable, not only of understanding, but of obeying its requirements. If then, this law be infinite, all its requirements must be infinite; and as all the faculties of man are finite and limited, it follows that these requirements are altogether above his faculties, either to understand or to obey. Where then would be the justice in the infliction of an infinite penalty on man, for not conforming to a law which is infinitely above his comprehension? Every rational person must at once discover the impropriety of this principle. But, should it still be contended that this law is infinite, I would ask, can such a law be violated or broken? I acknowledge I am unable to form any clear views of an infinite law; but if any such law does or can exist, I conceive it must be that by which God governs the material universe; by which he guides the sun, the stars, and the planets in their regular orbits, and preserves eternal order and harmony throughout the immensity of his works. Now admitting this law could be violated, what would be the consequence? Original chaos, and eternal night would take the place of every thing fair and beautiful which we now see and admire in creation. Then would the

——earth unbalanced from her orbit fly,
Planets and suns rush lawless through the sky;
And ruling angels from their spheres be hurl'd
Being on being wreck'd, and world on world;
Heav'ns whole foundations to their centre nod,
And nature tremble to the throne of God.

An infinite law would be equal to Go
for he is no more than infinite ; and it
be questioned whether it is in the pow
hovah to produce any principle equal t
That "the law of the Lord is perfect" i
a scriptural, but a rational principle. I
ments are all perfectly adapted to the
and condition of all its subjects ; and
ties are all suited to their proper en
there is a wide difference betwee
and infinity ; a principle or thing ma
fect in its kind, as perfect love, or
piece of machinery, and yet fall very
of infinity. Hence, we are exhorted to
fect, even as our farther which is in
perfect ; " but no one would ever think
come infinite.

4. There is one other ground on
infinity of sin has been argued, viz. the
the atonement. Had not sin been inf
said, there could have been no necessity
finite sacrifice to atone for it. Her
observe that the advocates for the do
the trinity and infinite sin are guilty
tion of the most plain and acknowledg
argumentation. They introduce two p
both of which are assumed, and attem
each one true by the other. If the infin
be the point in dispute, the infinite
which has been made to atone for it is
ed as an undeniable evidence of the c
and truth of the position. On the othe
attempting to prove the essential divini
head of the Son, we are told it was
necessary he should be truly God, as we
otherwise he could not have made th
sacrifice which was necessary to atone

But let us enquire, has an infinite
been made for sin? To this questio

sible there are many who would, without the least doubt or hesitation, return an affirmative answer. This sentiment has long been taught and received as a principle of divine truth; it is plainly expressed in the language of some most eniment divines; and by none, perhaps, more clearly than by the learned and pious Dr. Watts. In his hymns, which have long been in the use in most christian churches, we find these expressions,—"When God, the *mighty Maker died*;" "Behold! a God decends and *dies*;" "groans of an *expiring God;* and "*crucified my God;*" with many others of the same import. Now admitting all which the most rigid trinitarian ever contended for—that Christ was the true and essential Deity,—the uncaused and eternal Jehovah; how, I ask, can the doctrine of an infinite sacrifice or atonement be substantiated? Could self-existence suffer and die? Can we admit that he who is the source and fountain of life, and "who only hath immortality" could sease to exist? These questions must be answered in the affirmative, and they must be proved true, before the doctrine of an infinite atonement for sin can be established as truth. But in order to obviate this difficulty, we are told that our Saviour, although he was truly and essentially God, was also really and properly man,—that he had two distinct and separate natures, the divine and the human; and that it was the human, and not the divine nature, which suffered and died on the cross. Where then, is the idea of an infinite atonement in the death and sufferings of Christ? It has gone,—vanished like the mist before the beams of a mid-day sun. Many attempts, it is true, have been made in all ages since the introduction of the doctrine of the trinity into the Christian system, *to explain* this intricate subject; by al*edging that in* consequence of the intimate con-

nexion of the divine and human natures in Christ, his human nature suffered in a much greater degree, and that these sufferings were far more valuable and meritorious in the sight of God, than would have been the case had it not been for this union of natures. But after all, as it cannot be admitted that the divine nature in Christ, could be in the least degree, susceptible of suffering, these explanations have only served, ether to perplex the mind, by filling it with a jargon of unintelligible mysteries; or to show more clearly the absurdity of the sentiment.

All this difficulty in understanding the doctrine of atonement would be removed at once, if people would but attend to the plain, simple language of the New Testament on this subject; where the word atonement is found once and once only. The passage where it occurs is Rom. v. 11, and the apostle there says, "And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." He does not inform us that he and his believing brethren had received the virtues or the benefit of the atonement, but the atonement itself. In other passages, the same word in the original occurs, and is rendered reconciliation; and in every passage where it is found, it evidently refers to man, and not to God, as the party who receives it, or is affected by it. This is the plain, scripture doctrine of atonement or reconciliation; and this atonement is what every true christian receives and enjoys by faith in his Redeemer. In the death of Christ, he beholds a wonderful display of God's unchanging love to perishing sinners; and "through the blood of the everlasting covenant," he becomes "reconciled to God."

I have now examined every ground on which the doctrine of infinite sin can possibly be maintained; and I think shown conclusively, that

not one of them is tenable. But as this sentiment has been the principal argument in support of the reasonableness of endless punishment, it deserves some further attention. I will therefore proceed to offer some objections to the sentiment, which have not, as yet, been noticed.—And,

1. If sin be infinite, all distinction in crimes, and all degrees of guilt, and criminality in sinners, are entirely done away. There can be no such thing as degrees, or parts of infinity; consequently the person who is guilty of one sin, is just as criminal as he who has committed ten thousand; and the man who should wrong his neighbor to the amount of one cent, deserves as great a punishment as the black assassin, who should enter his neighbor's dwelling at midnight, —murder the unconscious slumbering inmates, and set fire to the house. In short, every son and daughter of humanity, who has committed even what we are accustomed to term the smallest crime, must sustain the character of an *infinite sinner!*

2. This sentiment denies that the sinner can ever be justly and adequately punished for his sins, or even for the smallest one of them. Infinite sin deserves infinite and endless punishment; and we are told the justice of God can never be satisfied till every sinner has received his deserts. But, can this punishment ever be inflicted? and can the justice of God, on this principle, ever be satisfied? No; for until eternity shall end, this punishment can never have been endured; and consequently, divine justice must, till then, remain unsatisfied.

3. It is a virtual denial of the final salvation of a single individual of the human family. All have *sinned;* and of course, according to this *sentiment,* as has been already shown, have become *infinite* sinners, and are under an infinite

weight of guilt. Now, how can this guilt be removed? It will certainly require something superior to itself to remove it; and what can be greater? Not even God himself; for he is no more than infinite. It is in vain to talk about an infinite atonement, admitting such to have been made; for one infinity can never remove another, or counteract its operations.

4. Finally, it denies the infinity of God himself! It is an absolute contradiction in terms, to say that more than one infinite principle can exist in the universe; especially if one be opposed to the other in its nature. If, therefore, we admit that sin is an infinite principle, we must forever abandon the idea that any other principle, or even God himself, is, or can be infinite.

You will now, my respected hearers, be able to judge for yourselves, whether it is our duty as rational beings, to receive as divine truth, a principle of doctrine so entirely destitute of all foundation, and which involves so many contradictions and absurdities as that of the infinity of sin. And if this principle be abandoned, as I think it must be by every candid person; and if we admit that sin is finite in its nature, being the limited act of a finite creature; it must appear unreasonable in the highest degree, to attach infinite effects or consequences to it. Reason, therefore, is most clearly against the doctrine of endless punishment, in this view of our subject; for if we have arrived at correct conclusions respecting the nature of sin, we cannot reasonably believe a just God will inflict for it, a punishment so vastly disproportioned to its demerit.

Some distinguished orthodox divines of the present day appear to have become sensible of the impropriety of attempting any longer to support the doctrine of endless punishment on that of the infinity of sin; and have consequently abandoned this ground as untenable. They now

teach that men will not be punished eternally for the sins of this life; but for those they will continue eternally to commit. This, it will be perceived, is entirely abandoning the principles of the early reformers; and even of that far famed assembly, whose confession of faith and catechism are considered the standard of faith in most orthodox churches. But how do they attempt to prove the endless continuance of sin? Do they appeal directly to the testimonies of divine inspiration? No; were they to do this, they would be met with express declarations to the contrary. They would there learn that, "for this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;" and, "to take away our sins;"—that he is the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" that "he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet;"—and surely, sin is an enemy; and finally, that death, the last enemy, the consequence and wages of sin, shall be destroyed. What then is the process of reasoning by which they attempt to establish this principle? It is by analogy. The sinner, say they, leaves this world unreconciled to God, and with all his sinful propensities with him; therefore, as he has sinned through this life, he will continue to sin eternally; and consequently eternally remain a subject of wrath.

Now as this is nothing but bare assertion, unaccompanied by the least evidence to support it, I might pass it by as such; and take no farther notice of it until it is proved true. But as this would be following a bad example, I will proceed to show that it is entirely groundless.

All the hopes we can have of an existence beyond the grave must rest altogether on the *strength of* scripture testimony. Neither reason *nor philosophy* were ever yet able to implant in *the heart of* man a hope which is "full of im-

mortality;" nor to assure him that if he died, he should live again. Neither can they teach us, admitting we are to live beyond the present state of existence, what bodies or constitutions we shall possess in an immortal state. What then, say the scriptures on this subject? The same passages which assure us we shall live again, clearly point out to us what bodies we shall have in eternity. Paul, writing to his Corinthian brethren, when speaking of death, and the resurrection to life and immortality, says,—"It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." It was not my intention, in the present discourse, to make much use of scripture testimony, as the design of it would not lead me to that course. But, as the position I am now examining rests merely on assertion, without any arguments to support it: it became necessary in this instance, to have recourse to scripture, in order to obtain data on which to found an argument. From the information which the language cited gives us of the constitution of man in an immortal state, we at once discover, that in reasoning on what will be in a future existence, from what we know of the present, analogy entirely fails us. We can no more tell what the conduct of a man will be in eternity, from what we see of his conduct in this life, than we can tell what will be the motions of the butterfly, by observing the movements of the worm from which it is produced.

In this world, we have natural bodies, composed of the grosser elements of matter; in the world to come, we shall have spiritual bodies.—*In this state of being*, our bodies are corruptible; *in the next*, they will be incorruptible. Here, we are weak and comparatively helpless; there, this

weakness will be succeeded by power sufficient for all purposes. Now, by reason of our fleshly lusts and passions, we are often led into such courses of life as render us dishonorable; then, all our faculties will operate together in such a manner as to render us glorious. These are plain and natural deductions from the language of the apostle; and I now ask, is it reasonable to suppose with such constitutions, and in such a condition, that men will continue eternally to sin?

I have now, I believe, examined every ground on which the believers in endless punishment have ever attempted to support the idea of its reasonableness; there may be others, but if so, I am unacquainted with them. We have seen that the long cherished notion of the infinity of sin, is without foundation; and on bringing it to the test of reason, (and its advocates have never attempted to support it by the scriptures,) it has vanished like the "baseless fabric of a vision." The endless continuance of sin, in a spiritual and immortal constitution, has also been shown to be contrary to the clearest and plainest dictates of sound reason; and thus the whole foundation on which the reasonableness of this sentiment is, or can be predicated, is entirely gone,—it has crumbled into dust.

I might now, perhaps, with propriety dismiss the subject, having shown that the doctrine under consideration has no foundation in reason; but I wish to present one other view of it, in which its opposition to reason must be apparent to all who will allow themselves to exercise their reason upon it. Rewards and punishments, in order to be reasonable, must be apportioned to the merit or demerit of those who are their recipients. Now if an infinite and eternal distinction is to be made in the condition of mankind, in a

future state of existence; and if this distinction is to be founded on the characters which the different individuals form and sustain in this life, does not reason clearly show that this distinction is altogether disproportionate to the difference which exists in the characters of men in this world?

In order to illustrate the subject more fully, let us suppose virtue and vice, or righteousness and sin to be divided into one hundred degrees each; and that the dividing line in the characters of men is fifty. Between eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, and eternal condemnation in hell, in the common acceptation of the terms, there is the greatest imaginable, not to say infinite difference. Reason, therefore, will teach us, that a person, in order to be justly entitled to the kingdom of heaven, should possess the whole hundred degrees of virtue or righteousness; and on the other hand, for a person to be justly subjected to the endless suffering of hell, he should possess, or be guilty of all the degrees of sin; or in other words, that he should be wholly sinful, without the least mixture of goodness in his whole character; and unless this distinction—this total difference in the characters and conduct of men does exist, that system which awards to human righteousness eternal life, and to the wickedness of men interminable wo, is manifestly inconsistent and unreasonable. But the difficulty does not end here; suppose a man to possess fifty one degrees of righteousness, and forty nine of sin; as he stands on the favorable side of the dividing line, he would according to the system under consideration be entitled to eternal life. How, or when is he to receive his punishment for his *forty nine* degrees of guilt? As it is denied that *sin is punished* in this life, is it not clear that he *will eternally* escape the punishment which he

justly deserves? On the other hand, we may suppose a man possesses fifty one degrees of sinfulness, and forty nine of righteousness; as he is on the unfavorable side of the line, he would of course be consigned to remediless wo. When will he receive the just reward for his righteousness? And I would inquire further, how can it be said that God renders to these two individuals, or to either of them, according to their deeds?

But to this it will probably be answered, all men, while in a state of nature, and before experiencing the influence of divine grace on their hearts, are altogether sinful in the sight of God, destitute of all true righteousness or goodness; and consequently, God regards all their conduct as well as their character with disapprobation; —that the influence of this grace is such, as to effect a radical and entire change, not only in the outward conduct, but also in the affections of those who feel its operations; so that those who before this change were altogether sinful, and "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," now become "vessels of mercy," prepared for eternal felicity. Now this again is an entire assumption of facts,—a bare assertion unaccompanied with any proof, either from revelation, reason, or experience. This sentiment is not only unfounded in scripture and reason, but it is directly contrary to what we see and know to be truth. Search among the children of men—go to those countries where the light of the gospel has never shone—where the name of the Saviour was never heard,—and you cannot find an individual who is entirely destitute of all goodness,—in whom none of those pure and amiable affections which God himself has implanted in the human heart, is never exercised. And O, tell me not these are all sinful in the sight of him who gave them, —*tell me not* that the affection, care and kind-

ness of parents for their children are unholy and sinful,—and tell me not that the gratitude, love, and obedience of children to their parents are odious in the view of him who has commanded them; although they operate in the bosom of an unregenerate heathen. On the other hand, look at those who profess to have passed through this great and marvellous change, even those who have been truly regenerated by the influence of God's spirit; are any perfect in good works? Are there any who possess or exercise no unholy passions or propensities? No; not one. And is sin, committed by a regenerate person less odious in the sight of God than if it were committed by one who had never enjoyed the light of divine truth? To suppose this, would be to reverse all our ideas of propriety; and to disregard the maxims and instructions of our Redeemer.

The truth is, in the human character there is every gradation and degree of virtue and vice,—from the most perfect Christian, to the most abandoned wretch who disgraces humanity.—These degrees and gradations are very numerous, and consequently minute; and such is the nature of human actions—so various are the springs from which they flow, that it is often difficult to tell

"Where ends the virtue or begins the vice."

As the man who should claim heaven and immortal felicity, for even the most perfect righteonsness of which human nature is capable would be altogether more unreasonable in his bemands than the laborer, who, for one day's services, should claim a rich estate; so it is equally unreasonable and absurd to suppose that a frail, finite mortal can deserve the pains of an endless hell, for the sins of this transitory life; or that a God of infinite justice and mercy *will inflict* these pains on his dependent children.

SERMON....No. 2.

THE DOCTRINE OPPOSED TO THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

I JOHN IV. 16...."God is love."

Various are the systems which have been introduced and supported in the world, among different nations, and at different periods of time, respecting the existence and essential attributes of Deity; and would time, and the limits of one discourse permit, it would be not only interesting, but instructive to notice these different theories. From the most remote periods of antiquity to which the faithful records of history reach; and among all the nations of the earth, whether civilized or barbarian, the belief of a Supreme First Cause of all things has existed. While the theology of some nations has assigned to him a rank and character but very little superior to human beings, ascribing to him the same feelings and desires as exist in men; that of others has considered it a derogation from his dignity, to suppose him the creator of the material universe; which they considered the work of inferior gods, or *æons*, as they were called by the Persians and some other nations. Some have considered him as all light, holiness, goodness, and purity; and hence, whatever of imperfection and evil there is in the universe, has been ascribed by them to a self existent evil spirit. Others have ascribed to him such attributes and principles, as are calculated to repel all true and sincere affection from the heart; and fill the mind with dread, and *slavish fear*. Hence, different kinds of worship,

originating in different motives and feelings, have been instituted and kept up amongst men. Some have worshipped him to procure his favor, and others to avert his wrath;—some from a desire of happiness, and others from a dread of misery; but too few, it is feared, render him the sincere homage of the heart for what he is, and for what he has already done for them; and from a sense of the peace and happiness which flow from true spiritual worship.

Whilst reason teaches us there must be a God —whilst the whole creation proclaims his being, and the infinitude of his perfections—whilst "the heavens declare" his glory, "and the firmament showeth his handy work," they all continually remind us that none can "by searching find out God;"—none can "find out the Almighty unto perfection." But although it is impossible for frail, short sighted mortals to obtain a perfect knowledge of him whose ways are inscrutable and "past finding out"; yet he has been pleased to make all those revelations of himself, which are necessary to promote the well being of his intelligent offspring. The immense volume of nature which is spread open before us, is full of useful instruction. In it we behold magnificent displays of the creative energy, the directing wisdom, and preserving goodness of the Almighty,—we can here trace with ever new and increasing delight, the evidences of his parental care for all his dependent creatures.

But it is in the volume of divine inspiration, that our Creator has most fully revealed himself to the children of men. It is here he has proclaimed his name, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, *forgiving iniquity* and transgression, and sin, and that

will by no means clear the guilty." Here we learn his nature, which is spiritual; and his character, which is that of a Father. Here we learn his essence, which is love; and here also, we are made acquainted with his glorious purpose in the creation of man, and his gracious designs respecting the final and eternal destination of his earth-born children. And by a careful examination and comparison of the lessons of instruction imparted to us in the book of nature and the book of grace, we shall find them all to harmonize, and perfectly to agree. With these means of instruction within our reach, and with capacities to understand all which is necessary for our real good, if we fail of obtaining a suitable knowledge of our heavenly Father, it must be in consequence of our own neglect. Let us then, with a humble, though firm reliance on God for his assistance, enter on the investigation of the subject before us, with all that candor which its importance demands; and let us endeavor, from the lights of nature, of reason, and revelation, to draw forth that knowledge of the attributes and perfections of our great Creator, which will render us truly wise.

That God is ONE, undivided and indivisible in his essence and his existence, is not only one of the plainest dictates of reason, but is in accordance with the whole testimony of scripture.—The unity of God is demonstrable from the same evidences in nature which prove his existence.—Throughout the immensity of his works, so far as the lights of science and philosophy have been able to penetrate, the same unerring laws prevail. Unity, not only of design, but of operation, is every where apparent. The same principle which regulates the motions of the earth, controls the movements of all the heavenly bodies.

The principle of animal life is the same in al living creatures; the same in man as in beast.— These are incontrovertible evidence that God i one; and the scriptures abundantly corroborat this truth.—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our Goc is one Lord," is called "the first of all the com mandments;" and not only our Saviour, but th apostles taught this as a fundamental article o the Christian faith. This principle we shall fin of great importance in the illustration of our sub ject.

What some have called the *natural*, but which perhaps, may with propriety be termed the *ne cessary* and incommunicable attributes of Deit are self-existence, independence, omnipresence immutability, and eternity; but, as we are no competent to form any very clear or adequat conceptions of them, and as they are not neces sary in the illustration of the subject before us any further than they serve to give us some ide of his infinity, and show us the necessary perfec tion of his other attributes, they will require n additional remarks.

The attributes of God with which we are a this time more particularly concerned, are thos by the exercise of which he created the universe and gave to it, its fixed and immutable laws,— by which he imparts life, and all faculties to an mated beings,—governs the moral world,—di penses suitable rewards and punishments to th subjects of his moral government, and communi cates happiness to all creatures, according t their various capacities for enjoyment. Thes have usually been denominated knowledge, wi dom, power, love, truth, justice and mercy. A we are ourselves capable, in a degree, of posse sing and exercising these principles or attribute we are consequently able to understand som

thing of their operations, not only as they exist in ourselves, but as they are exhibited to us in the works and ways of God. And the more perfectly we understand them as they exist in him, the more nearly we shall be able to resemble him, and the more happy shall we render ourselves.

Knowledge may be defined as that attribute of Jehovah, by, or through which he has a perfect comprehension of all things, whether to us past, present, or to come. Strictly speaking, there can be with him neither past nor future; but all is one "eternal now." He "must *know*, intimately" and perfectly, "the constitution and properties of all the things he created;" and consequently, all their actions and their influence one upon another,—all the changes which can be effected by these actions, and by the trains of moral and physical causes which he has put in operation. That this knowledge is infinite, or unlimited, we infer from his omnipresence and eternity. Wherever he acts, there he is, "and where he is, he perceives." If we admit that any thing can transpire in relation to any of his works, which he did not from eternity perceive, or foreknow, we must suppose, that at the time such thing, or event does transpire, he receives an accession of knowledge; which would be to suppose his knowledge finite and limited. To say God foreknows the great, or important events which transpire in the world, such as the revolutions of states and empires, and the fate of monarchs or other individuals; and at the same time does not know all the conduct and movements of every living creature, would be in effect to say he foreknows events without knowing the causes which conduce to them; for the movements of a small insect may cause the revolution of an empire. But the testimony of the scriptures is suffi-

cient to decide this question, and to put it forever at rest. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning,"—"God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things,"—"Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite," are expressions of inspired writers, which cannot be easily misunderstood.

Some have considered knowledge and wisdom synonymous expressions; and hence, one has been defined or explained by the other.—But, as Dr. Paley justly observes, "in strictness of language, there is a difference between them; wisdom always supposing action, and action directed by it." I am not able to give any clearer definition of wisdom, than to say it consists in the arranging and combining of the elements or principles of knowledge; and in directing them all to their proper ends and uses. The perfect, or infinite wisdom of God is clearly exhibited in the works of creation,—in the perfect arrangement of all the parts which compose the whole universe,—in the order and harmony which prevail throughout the immensity of his works,—in the perfect adaptation of causes to produce their intended effects, and of means to their desired ends,—in the subserviency of parts to the whole; and in the conformity of all things to the purposes for which they were obviously created. With such demonstrations of the infinite wisdom of the great Creator, as we behold whenever we open our eyes on his works, we can need no evidence from the scriptures to confirm our opinions.

Power is the ability of any being to do, or not to do, according to his will. The power of God may therefore be defined as "that attribute or perfection whereby he can do whatever he has purposed to do, and hinder what he will not have

done." It also denotes his absolute right and authority over all his works. Omnipotent, or almighty power is justly ascribed to God. Nothing short of this could speak a world into existence, either from nothing, or from organic, but unorganized matter. Nothing but this could sustain a universe—roll forward the mighty wheels of nature, and control the vast affairs of creation. And nothing else could infuse life and animation into mere insensitive matter; or cause a clod of earth to live, move, feel, think and enjoy.—Whilst we ourselves exist, we cannot want proofs, either of the existence, or continued exercise of Almighty power in our heavenly Father. But, while the power of God is not, and cannot be bounded or controlled by any other being, nor by any exterior circumstances whatsoever; we must not admit the supposition that it enables him to do, or act contrary to his own nature; for we learn from the scriptures, that there are some things which he cannot do. Hence, the apostle tells us "he cannot deny himself;" and again, that it is "impossible for God to lie."

With the signification of the term love, we are all familiar. It is an affection or fondness of the heart for some particular object; as that which the parent feels for the child, and the child for the parent; the husband and the wife, the brother and the sister for each other; and that which usually exists between persons of congenial feelings and dispositions. Although the principle of love is the same, whatever may be its object, yet it receives different appellations, accordingly as it is called into exercise by different objects. Thus we are accustomed to speak of parental, filial, conjugal, fraternal, and social affection, or love, according to the object on which it is placed. This definition applies altogether

to love as it exists in man, or as it is exercised by him; and is not properly applicable to the love of God. Man exercises the principle of love in consequence of something which he beholds, or thinks he sees in the object calculated to promote his interest, or increase his happiness.—God can be influenced by no such motive. In man it is often, if not universally prompted by self interest; but in God it is entirely disinterested. In us it frequently degenerates into lust and sordid passion; in him it is ever pure and holy. In us it exists in a very small degree, and operates in an imperfect manner; in him it is perfect and unbounded in degree and operation. In us it is liable to changes, interruptions, and finally to become extinct; but in him it admits of no change, and can never end. God's love is parental, in the highest and most perfect sense of the word; and he has therefore appealed to the warm affections of a mother for her infant, to convey to our minds a proper and feeling sense of his love for his children. As he stands in the relation of Father to the whole creation, his love is universal, or unbounded; and seeks the good of all rational and sentient beings.

Truth is also ascribed to God as a divine attribute; and hence he is said to be a "God of truth." Perhaps the most simple manner in which truth can be defined, is to call it a perfect conformity to things, facts, and principles as they really exist. If in making a statement of facts, we conform our language to the facts stated, we are said to speak truth; and if we make a promise, and perform it according to its terms, we give a true promise. From the premises now laid down, we may deduce this all-important proposition,—whatever God has revealed to us, either *mediately* through his works, or *immediately* in the

scriptures, is immutably true; and whatever he has promised, he will assuredly perform.

Divine justice will next claim our attention; and as this is the attribute of Deity on which the doctrine of endless punishment is supposed, by its advocates, more particularly to be founded, it will require a more full and particular investigation. Justice, when applied to man, consists in "giving to every man what is his due." In the administration of justice by civil judicatories, it is as necessary to give to every one what of right belongs to him, as to inflict punishment on the guilty,—to award to individuals property which has been unjustly taken, or withholden from them, or an equivalent for it, as it is to punish the person who has taken it. But when this attribute is contemplated in our heavenly Father, it is supposed, by too many, to consist altogether in the infliction of punishment. The justice of God has been considered two-fold, retributive, and vindictive. Retribution signifies "repayment," or a "return accommodated to the action." A righteous retribution from God to man is not only a plain doctrine of the scriptures, but one which is conformable to reason, and our own experience. God "is a God that judgeth in the earth;" and not only the "righteous" but the "wicked and the sinner" are justly "recompensed" by him. None can transgress his laws with impunity; and none can obey them from the heart, without receiving an adequate reward. The righteous man, therefore, is as much entitled, *in justice*, to that peace of mind, and freedom from condemnation, which are the rewards of obedience, as the sinner is to the guilt and condemnation which are the consequences of unrighteousness.

It is acknowledged that all the punishments which God inflicts in this world are emendatory;

or, in other words, that they are of the nature and character of parental chastisements, and intended for the reformation of the sinner. But in the coming and eternal world, we are told it will be different; for although the punishment which will be there inflicted will be altogether more severe, and the suffering more intense than what can be endured in this life, yet it will not be intended for the good of the sufferer, and consequently, the justice which inflicts it will be vindictive. I can conceive of no sentiment more abhorrent to all the better feelings of the human heart than this. *Vindictive justice* is, in fact, a contradiction in terms. By vindictiveness we understand a revengeful temper or disposition of mind; and we have not the least hesitation in pronouncing such a spirit in man, most odious and detestable. Revenge always presupposes an injury received, either real or imaginary; and the reception of an injury as necessarily presupposes imperfection or weakness; otherwise there could be no liability to receive such injury. To say, therefore, that God can receive an injury, is to say he is imperfect; and to say he does, or can exercise vindictive wrath or anger, is to degrade his character to the level of the wild and ferocious savage, who exults in the groans and agonies of his expiring foe. Yea, it sinks it far below this level; for the most merciless savage could never be induced to inflict such tortures on his offspring, as we are taught the "God of love" will inflict on his own children. Away, then, with this horrid and blasphemous sentiment; and let us no longer dignify with the name of justice that barbarous principle, which at best can only claim the appellation of revenge, cruelty, and unfeeling ferocity.

We have considered the justice of God as ret-

ributive; and it has been shown that this view of it is both scriptural and reasonable. But, I conceive this definition is not sufficiently full and explicit, to give us a perfect view, or understanding of this divine attribute; and for this reason I shall proceed to introduce some others, which have been given by learned and eminent writers, and which have been generally received as correct. Perhaps there is no definition of divine justice which has been more generally received than that which represents it as goodness directed by wisdom. This will hold good with respect to parental justice in man, as well as in God; and can therefore be clearly defined. The natural love of a parent for his child will prompt him at all times, to do those things which tend to promote the happiness of the beloved object.—If the parent consulted only the present enjoyment of the child, he would withhold from him nothing which would contribute to present delight; but his wisdom, imperfect as it is, teaches him that some indulgencies which cause present pleasure will produce future suffering; and consequently, justice to his child impels him to withhold them. Such however is the imperfection of human wisdom, that many of our acts towards our children, though prompted by the best of motives, often operate to their injury or injustice. But not so with our heavenly Father; his unbounded parental goodness is directed by unerring wisdom; and consequently, in this view of his justice, no act of his can be a real, or final injury to any of his children. How, then, I ask, can the infliction of endless suffering, without the least design of doing any good to the sufferer, be in accordance with this attribute of God?

Although the definition of divine justice which I have now *given*, is undoubtedly correct, as a

general explanation, yet it is not sufficiently explicit; for as all the acts of God are acts of "goodness directed by wisdom," it does not distinguish with sufficient clearness, between those which are acts of mere justice, and those which are properly called acts of mercy. In order to remedy this deficiency, we may adopt another received definition of the justice of God; which is, that it "consists in his constant and immutable will, to dispense to every one, that which best corresponds with his moral state." Justice between man and man, as has been already observed, is the constant will to render to every one according to his due; and a man is called just, who continually does this; so the Supreme Being is styled infinitely just, because he invariably renders to every man that which best comports with his moral condition. As I shall have occasion again to advert to this sentiment, I shall, for the present, dismiss this particular, and proceed to the consideration of mercy, the remaining attribute of the Almighty.

Divine mercy has been defined as "that essential perfection in God, whereby he pities and relieves the miseries of his creatures. It is distinguished from love, inasmuch as the object of love is the creature simply," without regard to the circumstances in which he may be placed; while "the object of mercy is the creature fallen into misery," or distress of any kind. Mercy has been styled the darling attribute of God; and in the language of inspiration, we are told he "delighteth" in it. It is displayed by our Father in heaven towards his children, in delivering them from that guilt which is the cause of their condemnation and unhappiness. Mercy has been supposed to consist in the deliverance of men *from the* punishment which strict and impartial

justice would inflict on them for their sins. But, a moment's reflection will convince us, that this is setting the attributes of Deity in hostile array, one against another; so that if one receives its full demands, the other must remain unsatisfied. It will be in vain to say that the justice of God has been satisfied, by the sufferings and death of Christ, in such a manner that mercy can now flow to the sinner, without infringing the demands of justice; for this, besides being unwarranted by the scriptures, would be, in effect, saying that justice has no claims on the sinner; and of course, can inflict no punishment. That the mercy of God is not in opposition to his justice, we learn from the explicit language of the Psalmist;—"Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for thou renderest to every man according to his work."

Such are the glorious attributes which, by the common consent of all enlightened Christians, are ascribed to the adorable Parent of creation; and it is conceded by all, that he possesses them in an infinite, or perfect degree. Although it is impossible for us, by the utmost exertion of our mental faculties, to form any adequate ideas of infinity, yet our conceptions of the perfections of God are amply sufficient for all our purposes. They are such as lead us to consider him worthy of all adoration, and of unshaken confidence. We must be fully sensible, in view of these attributes, that he possesses both the will and the ability to do all things for the greatest possible good of the whole universe; and that, not only in time, but through eternity, he will remain the same kind Father, and unchanging benefactor of all his intelligent offspring.

As the attributes which have been considered, are all supposed to be infinite,—as they are not

opposite, or contradictory to each other, in their nature or operations,—and as, in reality, but one infinity can exist, it is necessary, in order to a correct understanding of our subject, that we ascertain some one point, or principle in which they can all centre and harmonize. This principle is presented to us in the language of the text,—*God is love.* In no part of the inspired writings is either of his other attributes introduced to express his essential nature or character; for although he is all powerful, just, and wise, yet he is never called either power, justice, or wisdom in the abstract. The apostle, in the language immediately following the text, proceeds to illustrate and enforce the important principle which he had laid down; and says, "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him."—Hence we may rationally and safely conclude, that however different, or various the attributes of God may appear to us, as they are exercised towards the children of men, they are, none of them, opposed to the principle of eternal and unchangeable love.

The view which has now been taken of the subject before us, presents us more clear and consistent conceptions of the character of the Divine Being, than any other which can be presented; and more than any other, it tends to reconcile us to the varied allotments of his Providence. In the world of mankind, we discover all grades of human character, and all conditions of which we can conceive; and these different characters and conditions of men, render different manifestations of the divine attributes necessary; and these, we find by experience, are made by our heavenly Father. When a person becomes depressed in spirit, either from the temporal calamities which he suffers, or from a sense of his own

sinfulness, God frequently manifests himself as a being filled with kindness and tender compassion towards the sufferer; and this manifestation of his attributes which all harmonize in love, is called mercy. When he sees his children placing their affections in too great a degree for their own good, on any of the perishing things of this world, by an exercise of his power, he often removes from them the beloved object; but this is as much an act of his love as any other, because intended for the final good of the creature. Many times we see persons pursuing a careless and thoughtless course of life, totally regardless of those things which make for peace; until by some sudden and unexpected interposition of Providence they are aroused from their stupid indifference, and led to those reflections, and that course of life which alone can impart true happiness.

But in nothing, perhaps, do we discover a more full and perfect display of the goodness of God, and the agreement of his attributes in that of love, than in the infliction of a just and equitable punishment for sin. There are those to whom he has manifested himself as a kind and merciful Parent, in times of affliction,—who have been taught by him the impropriety of placing their affections, and centering their hopes of happiness on the things of this world; and who have been awakened by the interposition of his Providence to a sense of their situations, and their accountability to him; who, nevertheless, persist in disobedience, and become hardened in iniquity.—The moral condition of such persons requires more severity; and the love of God, as well as his justice demands its infliction. This sentiment is abundantly confirmed by the testimony of scripture. "For whom the Lord loveth he chas-

teneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." The apostle also expressly informs us that God chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Thus we discover the attributes of Deity, all operating together in the most perfect harmony for the final good of the sinner. Eternal love seeks the salvation of man; and eternal justice goes hand in hand with it, in effecting this glorious object.

We are now prepared to introduce the direct inquiry,—is the doctrine of endless punishment consistent with the attributes and perfections of God? In answering this question, it may not be improper to go back in imagination to that period in eternity, (if I may be allowed the expression,) which immediately preceded the creation of the material universe. It must be admitted that in giving existence to rational beings, endowed with such capacities for enjoyment as man is, God acted from some motive; to deny this, would be to deny his supreme intelligence. As his attributes and perfections must all be coeternal with himself, he must necessarily have always possessed within himself an infinite fullness of happiness and glory; and consequently to promote or secure these could not have been his purpose. What then, I ask, was this purpose? As it is the nature of love to seek the happiness of its objects, so we are constrained to believe that the only purpose of infinite love in conferring existence was to bestow happiness; and any other conclusion at which we can arrive, would amount to a denial of the unbounded love of God.

It cannot be said that the gift of existence to any being who, in the final issue of that existence, is, on the whole, a loser by it, is an act

of love; and it is altogether immaterial whether this final loss be in consequence of a decree, or purpose of the being who gave him existence, or of an agency which he received at his creation. Leaving out of the question, then, that horrid sentiment, which teaches that the endless wretchedness of millions of rational beings was made certain, by an eternal and irrevocable decree of God; and adopting the more popular dogma of the present day, that man is a free agent, and that his eternal happiness or misery depends on the use he makes of his agency, the result at which we arrive is precisely the same. For, if God bestowed on man an agency at his creation, which he knew would be the cause of his final and irrecoverable ruin, the bestowment of that agency, with the certain knowledge of its consequences, is as much an evidence of a determination in God to make the creature an eternal loser by his existence, as the promulgation of an irresistible decree to that effect could possibly afford. In this view of the subject, the gift of existence, instead of being an act of love, would be an act of infinite cruelty.

Another question now presents itself for our consideration;—Did God, in the creation of the universe, so arrange the system of things—of causes, and events, as to secure the certain accomplishment of his purpose? By his infinite knowledge he must infallibly foresee what would be necessary to this end; his infinite wisdom would enable him to devise a perfect plan; and his almighty power to carry this plan into operation. By a very plain and simple process of reasoning, therefore, we arrive at a satisfactory conclusion on this point; and the only answer which can be returned to our question is an affirmative. But the testimony of revelation is *amply sufficient* to settle this question to the satis-

faction of every candid inquirer. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure;" and we are further told, God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." In fact, the very idea of the infinity of God's perfections incontestibly proves that no event can happen as a contingency with him, or in opposition to his eternal purpose.

Many attempts have been made to reconcile the doctrine of endless sin and misery with the acknowledged attributes and perfections of Deity; and also to evade the force of the argument deduced from them in favor of universal salvation. Some of the principal ones I will now notice.

1. In attempting to evade the force of argument in favor of the salvation of all men, which has been drawn from the attributes of God, it is said, the argument proves too much; and therefore, destroys itself. Every argument, say our opposers, which would prove the endless continuance of sin and suffering inconsistent with the goodness of God, would prove the existence of them in this world, incompatible with the same goodness; for if he be infinitely good, and permit them to exist at all, he may be equally good in permitting them to exist eternally. Now if it can be fairly proved from scripture, or by any legitimate arguments drawn from reason, that God permits any sin, suffering, or evil of any description to exist in the world, for any other purpose than to cause final good from it, then, I acknowledge, our argument must be abandoned. It is true there are many circumstances transpire, in which we are not able to discern the goodness of God; and frequently, when suffering some of the ills of this life, we are led to exclaim with Jacob,

"all these things are against me." But Jacob lived to see, that the evils which he so feelingly lamented were real blessings; not only to himself, but to those wicked sons whose iniquitous conduct was the cause of all the sufferings he endured. And ought we not rather to conclude that in all we are accustomed to call evil, there is some real, though hidden good, than by denying it, to deny the perfect goodness of God? But if evil be perpetuated without end, then no good can possibly succeed it. A direct appeal to the scriptures will be sufficient to decide the question before us. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." "Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

By the light of these scriptures we are able to discover the goodness of God, the harmony of his perfections, and the excellency of his purpose in permitting the temporary existence of evil. Never could the value of saving grace be fully appreciated,—never could the song of redeeming love be sung, had not man been so far under the dominion of sin as to need a deliverance from it. The best, and most affectionate earthly parent will subject a beloved child to pain and suffering, for the sake of some good which he could nor otherwise procure; but what father or mothet would do it for the sole purpose of causing pain? In further confirmation of the principle now laid down, we may notice the fact, that the captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering; and if suffering was necessary, in the plan of God, to make him perfect, have we not just grounds for concluding that infinite wisdom

makes use of the same means to perfect all mankind?

2. Believers in endless punishment have attempted to reconcile their doctrine with the attributes, particularly the love, or goodness of God; by arguing that his love seeks the greatest good of the universe, as a whole; and contending that the good of the whole may be consistent with the suffering of some of the parts which compose this whole. In order to illustrate this proposition, the simile of a diseased limb, which the good of the whole body requires should be amputated, is generally introduced. To show the futility of this argument, all that is necessary is to consider the similitude fully, and in all its bearings upon the point in question. If the surgeon who should be called to amputate the diseased limb, could as easily restore it to perfect health and soundness as he could amputate it, could it in any way be said that the greatest good of the sufferer required, not only the painful operation which he must undergo, but also the loss of his limb? And would not the surgeon who, with the ability to heal, should persist in his determination to amputate, be justly considered a monster of cruelty? And I ask further, cannot God as easily heal the sinner, and restore him to holiness, and consequent happiness, as he can cast him off forever, and consign him to hopeless agony and despair?

To this it may perhaps be replied, that God has instituted proper and suitable means for the conversion of the sinner, and his restoration to divine favor; and if any will be so hardened as to withstand the operation of these means, it is not consistent for him to confer salvation on any other terms, or by any other means than those he *has instituted*. I readily admit that it would be *inconsistent*, and not only so, but impossible for

God to save sinners by any other than his own appointed means; but, I ask, did he know, when he instituted the means of salvation, whether they would be effectual or not? and if so, does it argue, either infinite wisdom or goodness in him, to say he has established means to reclaim his children which he infallibly knew would be ineffectual? The more we examine this argument, the more clearly we discover its weakness and inconsistency; and we must, I think, be convinced, that it cannot be supported, either by reason or revelation.

It would seem to require but a very small degree of sagacity to discover the absurdity and falsity of the proposition, that the greatest good of the whole does not necessarily imply the good of every individual composing that whole; but as this argument has been frequently used, and by divines of considerable standing and reputation for learning and talents, we will give it a little further attention. Suppose the father of a numerous family should adopt this mode of reasoning; and finally come to the conclusion, that the greatest good of his whole family, instead of requiring the good of every member, was perfectly consistent with the severe suffering and misery of a certain part of his children; and should adopt this principle in regulating his conduct towards them. In order to have his practice correspond with his theory, it would become necessary for him to confine his favors to a part of his children, —to treat them with kind indulgence, and grant them every thing in his power to make them as happy as possible; while he treated the remainder, not only with cold neglect, but actually inflicted on them all the suffering in his power. Now suppose these neglected children were to inquire of their partial father the reason of his conduct towards them and his other children; would it be likely to satisfy them, and reconcile them to

their sufferings, were he to assert that his whole family, themselves included, were as perfectly happy as they would be if he treated them with the same affection as he did their brothers and sisters? Would any reasonable person be likely to be convinced there was as much happiness in that family as there was capacity for enjoyment? But, I go further, and would ask, admitting the more favored members of this family possessed one spark of fraternal affection, or even one feeling of humanity, could there be *any* happiness enjoyed in such a family? My friends, you can bring this subject home to your own feelings; and answer the last question to your own satisfaction.

3. As I wish clearly and fully as possible to illustrate the subject before us, and to notice all the arguments of our opponents which have any bearing on it; I will examine one other which has been used for the same purpose as the one last considered. It is contended that God does all things with express reference to his own glory; and as this glory consists in the union, or rather in the perfect display of all his attributes and perfections, to the view and understanding of all intelligencies; and as justice is as important an attribute as mercy, it is equally necessary that justice should be eternally exhibited in the punishment of sin, as it is that mercy should be displayed in saving from it.

We have already seen, from the very nature of God and his attributes, that he must eternally have possessed within himself an infinite fulness of glory, as well as of happiness. If, therefore, we allow the argument under consideration to be correct, we must suppose that prior to the existence or sin of man, there must have been beings, both sensitive and intelligent, on whom justice had been eternally inflicting punishment

But who were these beings? And for what were they punished? I am aware of the answers which popular theology would return these questions; we should be told they were angels, or some other high order of spiritual beings; and that they sinned in heaven, before the creation of the material universe. These answers will pass very well for good and sound doctrine, with such persons as never allow themselves to doubt the truth, or propriety of whatever may be advanced by their spiritual treachers; but I acknowledge myself too skeptical to admit such assertions without evidence of their truth; and I challenge any one to prove from the scriptures, that any sin was ever committed, in any part of the universe of God, previous to the transgression of our first parents in the garden of Eden.

But passing by this, and many other inconsistencies inseparably connected with this sentiment, let us come directly to the question, does the glory of God require the endless continuance of sin and misery? If we consider it necessary to promote and maintain this glory that he should be exhibited as a cruel, unfeeling, partial and revengeful tyrant, then I acknowledge, the question must be answered affirmatively; but on no other ground can such answer be correct. No one will deny that the glory of God consists in the union, or display of his adorable perfections; or, that a full display of justice is less necessary than a display of mercy; but it has been shown that these attributes are not and cannot be opposed one to the other—that justice equally with mercy seeks the final good of the sinner; and that it will inflict no more punishment than is necessary to accomplish this purpose. Is it not then obvious, that divine justice will be far more gloriously displayed, to the understanding and joy of all intelligencies, as having accomplished its whole ob-

ject, in humbling the sinner, and preparing him for the reception of eternal happiness from God, than as having entirely failed of producing the happy effect? The good sense of my hearers will furnish a sufficient answer to this question

"God is love;" infinite, eternal, unbounded, and immutable love; not to a part, but to all his dependant offspring. As this love had no beginning, it can have no end; and as it was not produced, nor called into exercise by the goodness or merit of the creature; so the imperfections, follies, and weaknesses of the creature can never extinguish it, or suspend its operations. It was love which spake creation into being, aud gave existence to man. Love caused "the morning stars" to sing "together," and "all the sons of God" to shout "for joy." Unchanging love continues to us our existence, and all the blessings we enjoy. Eternal, deathless love brought the blessed Redeemer down from heaven to earth; and love attuned the harps of the celestial messengers, who announced his birth to men; and caused them to sing "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." And it is love and that alone, which can perfect the children of men in holiness and true happiness.

And think you, my friends, this eternal and all-pervading principle, in which all the attributes of our heavenly Father centre and harmonize, will permit the endless continuance of sin and suffering? Think you that it can be overcome, or destroyed by any thing which is opposed to its heavenly nature? No; sooner shall the adamantine pillars of the heavens be shaken to their base,—sooner

"The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away,"

than the love of God know any change.

SERMON.—*No.* 3.

THE DOCTRINE UNSCRIPTURAL.

ISA. VIII. 20. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Of all the subjects which have ever engaged the attention of mankind, that of a future and eternal state of existence is altogether the most interesting and important. Early in life, even in the happy days of youth, we learn this solemn fact, *we must die;* and such is our innate love of existence, that the question, shall I live again? presses itself with a resistless energy on our minds. In attempting to answer this question, all the lights and resources of reason, science, and philosophy have been explored and exhausted; and they have all failed of giving an answer which can satisfy the inquiring mind, or impart to man a hope beyond the grave. Nor was it until the introduction of the gospel of Christ, through which life and immortality were brought to light, and illustrated by the resurrection of him who is the "head of every man," that this question, so fraught with unutterable interest to every son and daughter of humanity, received a satisfactory answer.

After receiving an assurance from divine revelation that we shall live again,—that the silent slumber of the grave shall be broken, and that this "corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," other questions, of equal interest and importance with the former, urge themselves on our minds.

What will be my condition in eternity? Will my eternal existence be a blessing, or an unending curse to me? Shall I be happy, or shall I be wretched in that state of being? are questions which, I doubt not, have presented themselves forcibly to the mind of each of my respected hearers; and it is all-important, to our peace and happiness, that we obtain satisfactory answers to them. But where shall we seek for such answers? To what source of information shall we apply? The arguments drawn from reason, and the attributes of God, so far as they can be understood by our limited capacities, have been considered in former discourses; and although we have found them all opposed to the doctrine of endless sin and suffering, yet as neither the light of reason, nor the acknowledged perfections of Deity can give us an assurance of an existence beyond the present, arguments deducible from them cannot be entirely satisfactory to the mind. As it is only through the medium of that revelation which God has given to us in the scriptures, that we can obtain any knowledge of a future existence; so it is to this revelation alone we must apply for information with respect to the nature of that existence, and whether it will be happy or miserable.

But here a difficulty of considerable magnitude arises. From almost the earliest period of Christianity, succeeding the apostolic age, different opinions have existed respecting what the scriptures teach on this point. While some have believed the final salvation of all men to be revealed in the bible, others have supposed that the endless punishment of a part of the human family is there taught. Tertullian, a presbyter of Carthage, about the commencement of the third century, is supposed to be the first who asserted the

proper eternity of hell torments; and his disposition appears to have been in perfect accordance with this cruel sentiment; for he declares that he should laugh, he should rejoice, and exult in beholding the endless burnings and torments of the pagan kings, philosophers and poets.

During the succeeding two or three hundred years, both sentiments prevailed in the Church; both amongst those who were considered orthodox, and those sects who were termed heretics; and from the fragments of writings which have come down to us from that period, it does not appear that these different opinions caused any difficulty in the churches; as neither party ever brought the opinions of the other on this point, as an accusation against them. But from this time, when the church became intoxicated with power; and when the clergy appeared to vie with each other in the introduction of additional creeds, ceremonies and corruptions of the pure principles of the gospel, the glorious doctrine of universal and impartial grace began to decline; until at the fifth general Council, holden at Constantinople in the year 553 it was formally condemned; and the writings of those eminent Fathers who had embraced it were destroyed.—From this period to the time of the reformation which was commenced by Luther and others in the early part of the sixteenth century; a period which has justly been termed the dark ages of the Church, the darker doctrine of endless unmerciful punishment almost universally prevailed; and even at this time by far the greatest portion of professing Christians believe, or profess to believe this gloomy sentiment.

But men are beginning to throw off the shackles with which they have so long been bound, and to *examine* and think for themselves. They *are beginning* to ascertain that they are capable

of understanding what God has revealed to them in the scriptures, and of drawing forth the treasures of divine truth from his written word; and we hazard nothing in asserting, that the more the record of God is examined, and the better it is understood, the more clearly it will appear that the doctrine of endless punishment has no foundation in the scriptures of unerring truth. Why else are the believers in this sentiment abandoning one after another of the principles they have so long advocated? Why giving up so many passages of scripture which they have formerly urged in support of the doctrine? We can account for these obvious facts on no other ground, than that the increased investigations of the present age, throwing additional light on divine revelation, have already produced such results.—Let us then, fearlessly, but candidly bring this sentiment to the test of revelation; and endeavor to ascertain whether it be of God or of man.

Previous to entering on the direct investigation of the subject before us, I would beg leave to introduce a preliminary proposition, which will be admitted true by christians of all denominations; and which must be kept constantly in view in the discussion of all questions, whose solution depends on scripture testimony. My proposition is this,—the scriptures contain a consistent and connected system of truth, and of doctrine; and consequently, when correctly explained, do not contain any declarations in relation to any one fact, or principle of doctrine, which contradict any other declarations contained in them relative to the same fact or principle. If therefore we are able to prove any particular sentiment true, by passages which relate directly to the subject embraced in that sentiment, we naturally infer that the opposite cannot be true. This is the method usually pursued by the different denom-

inations of Christians, in opposing the sentiments of those from whom they differ in opinion; and this method would be conclusive, would those engaged in controversy confine themselves to such passages as obviously relate to the point in dispute; or such as could be clearly shown, by their connexion or other circumstances, to have a direct application to such point. But so strong is the attachment of many Christians to their particular creeds, and so zealous are they in maintaining them, that they often bring forward passages which have not the least connexion with the point or principle they are endeavoring to establish.

There is another method by which particular principles of doctrine are shown to be unfounded in scripture. This is by an examination of the various passages adduced in support of such principles; and showing them, either insufficient to establish the principle in question, or irrelevant to the subject. This mode of controverting any particular point, or principle of doctrine, is equally conclusive as the other, and were all faithfully to adopt it, in the examination of their own systems, many passages which are urged in support of particular sentiments, would be abandoned, as inapplicable to them. In the investigation of the subject before us, I shall not confine myself exclusively to either of these methods; as the first has been so often employed as to lose much of its effect on many hearers; and the last would require a volume instead of a single discourse. I shall notice some of the leading passages usually adduced in proof of the doctrine of endless punishment; and, by considering their contexts, or comparing them with other passages, attempt to show, either that they do not relate to the subject at all, or *that they are insufficient* to prove it true.

shall also introduce some passages which, we believe, establish the opposite sentiment as truth; and attempt to show that these passages do, and must apply to that sentiment.

For the sake of perspicuity, I shall arrange the passages relied on by our opponents to substantiate their doctrine, in three classes; and shall notice,—

1. Those passages which, by declaring what the wicked do not, or shall not enjoy, are supposed to afford negative proof of their endless suffering.

2. Those which denounce positive punishment; and which are thought to teach the endless duration of this punishment. And,—

3. Those which are supposed to teach the doctrine of condemnation and punishment in connexion with the resurrection.

As it is admitted by the most learned and candid orthodox commentators, that the doctrine of endless, or even future punishment is not taught in the Old Testament, I shall confine my remarks to passages in the New Testament, except so far as some particular expressions in the former may be necessary in explaining the language of the latter.

I now proceed to introduce, and comment briefly on some of the leading passages in the first mentioned class; and among them there is none perhaps on which greater reliance is placed than our Saviour's words to Nicodemus, recorded John 3: 3—"except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." With these words may be connected those of John the Baptist, in the last verse of the same chapter,—"and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." To "see the kingdom of heaven," and to "see life," are unquestionably synonymous expressions; and signi-

fy the same as to "enter into the kingdom of God," or of heaven; and to enter into, or to enjoy life eternal. Time will only permit me to observe that the phrase, "kingdom of God," or "kingdom of heaven," as it occurs in the scriptures almost invariably signifies the reign or government of God over men in this life; either directly, as in the case of the ancient Jews, or by Christ, as was the case on the abolition of the theocracy, when the authority of God was transferred to him, and so enlarged as to embrace all nations and languages of the earth; or else the blessings of the gospel dispensation. Hence the Jews were called "the children of the kingdom;" and it was said to them "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;" and it was also said, "the kingdom of God is come unto you." The phrase life, life eternal, or everlasting life, is generally used in scripture to denote the present life, or the enjoyment of the believer in Christ. To this purpose our Saviour says, "he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."—Christ also defines this life, when he says, "and this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The future existence of mankind is usually expressed in the scriptures by the terms incorruption and immortality.

We may now inquire, What is to be understood by being born again? In answering this question I shall confine myself to the plain and simple language of inspiration; and in this way I hope to avoid those dark and mysterious illustrations which only serve to render the subject more obscure and unintelligible. But first it will be necessary to notice the scripture representa-

tions of the condition of man previous to the new birth, or regeneration. Here we are taught, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" they are represented as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."—This being the condition of all men previously to receiving the light of the gospel, we readily discover what change is necessary; a change from darkness to light—from ignorance to a knowledge of the truth—from unbelief to faith—from sin to holiness of heart; in a word, from the power and dominion of moral death, which is the "wages of sin," to spiritual life; and this change is effected by regeneration, or the new birth.—Direct declarations of Christ and the apostles may now be introduced in explanation of this change. Our Saviour says, as already quoted, "he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, is passed from death unto life."—John also describes this change, in language too plain to be easily misunderstood. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." And again, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Paul likewise confirms this view of the subject; and hence he prays in behalf of his Ephesian brethren, that God would give them "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him;" and that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened. The same brethren he exhorts to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. He tells his Colossian brethren, that they had "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." I might multiply quotations to the same effect, but these are sufficient for our purpose.

Keeping in view the definitions which have been given of the kingdom of God, eternal life, and the new birth, we must perceive at once that the passages under consideration have no relation to the future and eternal condition of man; and consequently they furnish no evidence against the final reconciliation and holiness of all mankind. But we are not under the necessity of confining the signification of the terms "kingdom of God," and "life," or "eternal life" to the circumstances and spiritual enjoyments of the present state of existence; and we will now admit that they do signify a future & immortal state of glory beyond the grave; and that the expressions of our Saviour and John the Baptist have express reference to that state. A few simple declarations from the mouth of the blessed Redeemer will be amply sufficient to show that these passages afford no proof of the endless exclusion of any man from the joys and blessings of heaven. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me; and this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I shall lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." How many are given to Christ? "The Father loveth the son, and hath given all things into his hand;" again, "all things are delivered unto me of my Father;" and again, "as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." In perfect unison with this is the language of Paul, when he declares that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Here the glorious purpose of God concerning his rational offspring is exhibited; and the means by which this purpose is to be accomplished are *presented to view.* God's purpose is to give *"eternal life,"* and salvation to all men; and the

means to effect this purpose are fully adequate to the end. Christ, by imparting the knowledge of "the only true God," and of himself, and bringing all men to the "knowledge of the truth," removes every obstacle to their admission to the kingdom of heaven, and confers on them "eternal life."—And so certain as he accomplishes the object of his mission, and finishes the work which the Father has given him to do, so surely will all be "taught of God"—renovated by the knowledge of divine truth—raised up "at the last day," and prepared for the full fruition of immortal joy in the "kingdom of God." Should it be said that Christ will not fully accomplish this glorious object, let it be remembered, the controversy of such as make this assertion is with him, and not with us.

"Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. 8: 9 is the next passage which I shall notice. These words are supposed to teach, that, as there are some who do not belong to Christ, so there are those who will never enjoy salvation, or eternal life through him. I shall readily admit that there is a sense in which those who have not the spirit of Christ, in consequence of not believing in him, are not his; but I ask, do they not belong to the "purchased possession" of the Redeemer? Are they not given to him in the covenant of grace, as the subjects of his kingdom? The testimonies already introduced are amply sufficient to answer these questions; but if they were not, there are others which cannot be misunderstood. "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "Wherefore God also hath *highly exalted* him, and given him a name which *is above every* name; that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

If we admit, as the apostle expressly declares, that Christ "died for all," that he "gave himself a ransom for all," and "by the grace of God tasted death for every man;" and at the same time contend that all are not his, we must believe he died in vain, at least as it respects those who are not his. But it has been admitted that there is a sense in which unbelievers are not Christ's; they are not his disciples or followers; they have not received his spirit, which is a "spirit of adoption," whereby they can cry, "Abba, Father." Could it be shown that such could never receive the spirit of Christ so as to become his, then I admit this passage would prove the final and eternal rejection from the kingdom of heaven of some portion of the human family; but this can never be done, without contradicting the plain declarations of the scriptures.

Other passages of this class, such as that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself," are frequently adduced as evidence against our doctrine. We as fully and firmly believe the truth of these scriptures as our opposers themselves. No Universalist ever taught or believed that men could be saved in sin, or without holiness. But we contend, when all shall "come unto the knowledge of the truth,"—when all shall be gathered together in Christ, and become new creatures in him; and when all shall be reconciled to God "through the blood of the cross," then all will be holy, and be admitted to the presence of God, and to all the joys of heaven. A murderer, according to the description of the apostle, in any

one who "hateth his brother;" and no man, while exercising hatred, can possess, or enjoy the life of a believer in Christ; for faith works by love, and whenever this love is perfected, hatred is entirely eradicated from the heart. In order, therefore, to derive any support to the doctrine of endless death from this passage, it must be proved that some men will eternally possess a murderer's spirit; and that hatred will never be overcome, or succeeded by love.

Some passages in the second class, which denounce positive punishment, and which are supposed to teach the endless duration of this punishment, will now claim our attention; and perhaps there is no one on which so great reliance is placed as Matt. 25: 46. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

The force of the argument drawn from this passage, consists entirely in the application of the parable, of which this is the close; and in the signification of the word rendered everlasting and eternal. Now if it can be shown either that the parable is misapplied, or that the word does not signify endless duration, all the support which this doctrine can derive from the language of the parable, is at once taken away; and I hesitate not to say that both can be easily done, by a direct appeal to scripture authority.

We will first consider the word everlasting, applied to punishment in the passage under consideration. It is readily acknowledged that this word is the same in the original as that which is rendered eternal, and applied to the life of the righteous in the same sentence; and it is supposed in both instances to signify endless duration. But let us examine the scripture use of *this word*. The land of Canaan was said to *have been given* to the seed of Abraham for an

erlasting possession;" but has not this pos-
sion ceased? From the time they were led
Joshua into this land, to the time they were
lly expelled from it was a period of only a-
t fifteen hundred years; and yet that was cal-
an everlasting possession. The covenant of
umcision was styled an "everlasting coven-
;" but Christianity teaches us that "circum-
on is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing,
the keeping of the commandments of God."
in; the priesthood of Aaron and his sons
repeatedly declared to be an "everlasting
sthood." But this priesthood has long been
ished, and the priesthood of Christ establish-
n its stead. Now it is obvious that any argu-
ts which would prove the unlimited significa-
of the word everlasting, would overthrow
istianity itself; for if God, who instituted
'everlasting priesthood" of Aaron and his
erity, has not abrogated it, the priesthood of
Redeemer is an usurpation; and the chris-
who should contend for the unlimited signi-
ion of the term everlasting, could never an-
the argument of the Jew for the endless per-
ity of his religion, founded on this word.
he word forever is perfectly synonimous in
gnification with everlasting and eternal; and
anslated from the same word in the original.
how is this word used in the sacred writings?
h, speaking of the time he was in the deep,
, "the earth with her bars was about me for-
;" and Paul, writing to Philemon respecting
ervant Onesimus, says, "for perhaps he there-
departed for a season, that thou shouldest
ve him forever." In one of these expres-
, a period certainly no longer than the life
of the servant is called forever; and in the
, the same term is applied to three days and
s. *To this* it may be replied, in the

words of Christ, the punishment of the wicked is contrasted with the life of the righteous; and as the same word is applied to both, one must continue as long as the other; but this conclusion by no means follows from these premises; for were it so, we could prove from the scriptures, that the hills and mountains would continue as long as the ways of God. See Hab. 3: 6. "He stood, and measured the earth; he beheld and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow; his ways are everlasting." Here the same word in the original which is applied to the ways of God, occurs twice besides, and is applied to the mountains and hills; but no one ever thought from this that they were of equal duration.

We may, however, admit that the punishment denounced in the parable will be of equal duration with the life promised; and the admission will by no means prove the endless continuance of the punishment. It has already been observed that the phrase "eternal life" is not generally used in the scriptures to signify a state of immortality beyond the grave; and from the passages adduced in support of this opinion, we learn that a person may enjoy eternal life at one time, and afterwards, in consequence of unbelief, be destitute of it; but an incorruptible or immortal life can never end nor change. The rule for understanding the duration expressed by the words everlasting and eternal is plain and simple; the words are adjectives, and are always connected with some substantive, either expressed or understood; and their signification, and the period of duration expressed by them must always be determined by the subject to which *they* are applied. When applied to God or his *perfections*, they express duration without begin-

ing or end; for these had no beginning and an have no end; but when applied to temporal objects, they can certainly express no longer duration than the continuance of such object; and herefore they are often used to express, not only a limited, but a short period of time.

The observations now made lead me to make a few remarks on the nature of punishment, to which the word everlasting is applied. The word in the original, which is translated punishment in the passage I am considering, signifies correction, chastisement, and a restraining, as well as what is usually termed punishment. In a former discourse, the impropriety and injustice of vindictive punishment were pointed out; and it was shown that any punishment inconsistent with the final good of the sufferer was incompatible with the acknowledged attributes of God.—Considering punishment, then, in this light, as chastisement or correction administered for the reformation and final benefit of the creature, it must necessarily come to an end; or else its object never will be attained.

But I must hasten to notice the application of this parable. It has generally been supposed that the judgment here predicted was to take place at the close of time, when all the dead should be raised, and the material universe be destroyed; and also that the punishment denounced was to be inflicted in a future and immortal state of being. But this, I hesitate not to say, is altogether an assumption of facts—an inference from the language of Christ which has not the least authority for its support, as I shall now proceed to show. And—

1. Neither in the parable, nor in the whole of the discourse of which it is a part, is there the least *intimation of* the close of time, the dissolution *of the universe*, the resurrection of the dead,

or of a future existence. And I ask, is it reasonable to suppose, if the judgment and punishment of the wicked are connected with events so important as these, that our Saviour should have passed them ever in silence, and said nothing about them?

2. From the language of Christ in the commencement of the parable, we are led to inquire, of what time was he speaking? When was he to "come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him?" for at that time hew as "to sit on the throne of his glory," and then the judgment was to take place. In the parable we do not find answers to these questions; and consequently, we are obliged to seek them elsewhere. He tells his disciples, Chap. 10: 23, that they should not "have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come;" and in the same conversation in which he spake the parable, he tells them,—"And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other:" he then adds the positive assertion that "this generation shall not pass till all these things are fulfilled."—But the most clear and decisive declaration is contained in the two last verses of Chapter 16. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.—Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." As the *judgment* in the parable is evidently according *to the works* of the different individuals who are

mentioned as the subjects of it, can we have, or can we ask for clearer evidence than is contained in the last quoted passage, that this judgment is long since passed? If Christ did come and "reward every man according to his works" at the time when he said he would come, then we see at once, that the common application of this parable is incorrect; and that it affords no evidence of endless, or even of future punishment.

Paul's words to the Thessalonians will next claim our attention. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."—(2 Thess. 1: 6—9.) In considering this passage, three particulars must be noticed. I. Those to whom God would recompense rest with the apostles. 2. Those to whom he would recompense tribulation, and punish with everlasting destruction; and 3. The time when this recompense should be administered.

1. Believing Thessalonians, or those who constituted the church at that place, are the persons addressed in this epistle; and the apostle represents them as enduring "persecutions and tribulations" for the gospel's sake; and as suffering for the "kingdom of God." These were unquestionably the persons who should receive a recompense of rest.

2. We are to ascertain who troubled these believers, and were to be punished for so doing. By consulting Acts 17th, from the 5th to the 13th verse, we find that "the Jews who believed not,

moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar;" and we are also informed that they "troubled the people," and did all in their power to destroy Paul and Silas, and to prevent the people from hearing and embracing the gospel. From the disposition always manifested by the unbelieving Jews, we conclude that it was these same persons who continued to trouble the Thessalonian believers, and who were the cause of the persecutions and tribulations they endured at the time Paul addressed them.

3. The time when they were in their turn to suffer tribulation, and be "punished with everlasting destruction," was "when the Lord Jesus should be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." We have already ascertained this time, if the express declarations of our Saviour are sufficient to fix it; and it is worthy of remark, that after the destruction of the Jewish polity, and the abolition of the Mosaic dispensation, the Jews, wherever they were, lost all the respectability and influence they had previously maintained; and from that time they have been, as Moses predicted, a "bye-word among all nations."

I had intended to notice some other passages which are supposed to teach the doctrine of interminable punishment; but as those which have been considered have always been deemed as conclusive as any in the scriptures on this point; and as time, and I fear the patience of my hearers, is wearing away, I must proceed to a consideration of those passages which have been thought to teach the sentiment of condemnation and punishment in connexion with the resurrection.

Rev. 20: 12, 13, 15 is the first passage which *I shall* notice. "And I saw the dead, small and

great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." On this passage, a very few remarks must suffice. It is acknowledged by all that the language of this book is highly figurative; and the most learned and able commentators readily acknowledge that they do not understand it. From the first ages of Christianity, there have always been great doubts, not only as to the meaning of its language, but also respecting the author of it, and the time when it was written; and this circumstance should caution us not to predicate any important principle of doctrine entirely on its testimony. But admitting it to be genuine, and to possess equal authority with the other parts of the scriptures, I conceive that the impropriety of referring this or any other prediction contained in it to events yet future, can easily be shown from the language of the book itself. In the introduction, contained in the first three verses, we have these words;—"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand;" and the opinion that the events predicted in the whole book were then shortly to "come to pass" is confirmed by the language of the Revelator in the last Chapter. "And he saith unto me, seal not the sayings of

the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand;" and again, "behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Connecting and comparing these expressions with the language of our Saviour quoted from Matt. 16: 27, 28, it must be obvious I think, that all the predictions contained in the book of Revelation, to whatever subjects they might allude, had their accomplishment during the generation then existing on the earth; and consequently, that the passage under consideration, can have no allusion to any event yet future.

But the passage on which the greatest reliance is placed to support the doctrine of punishment or condemnation in the resurrection state is found in John, 5: 28, 29. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." These words are supposed to afford incontestible proof, that when the long sleep of death shall be broken by the loud trump of the Archangel; and when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality," a part of mankind at least, will be raised to a state of interminable condemnation and woe; but this, as I shall now show, would be a plain contradiction, not only of the language of the apostle Paul, but of the assertion of Christ himself.

When the Sadducees, for the purpose of tempting and ensnaring our Saviour, proposed to him a question relative to the woman who had been the wife of seven husbands, he replied to them,—"ye do err, not knowing the scriptures *nor the* power of God; for in the resurrection *they neither* marry, nor are given in marriage, *but are as* the angels of God in heaven." This

answer, as recorded by Luke, is of the same import, but a little varied in form. "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. "These words very clearly point out the condition of men in the resurrection state; and show that it is such as to exclude the liability of suffering or condemnation; for if they are to be "as the angels of God which are in heaven," and equal to them, they can be no less pure than the holy, spiritual beings which surround the throne of heaven, in immortal and unfading glory. With this the language of Paul perfectly agrees." Speaking of the "resurrection of the dead," he says, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown is dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body;" and afterwards, when setting forth the glorious consequences of the resurrection of all men from the dead, he says,—"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, (or hell,) where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Perhaps the hearer will say, there appears to be a contradiction in the passages introduced; and as the two opposite principles which they seem to teach cannot both be true, we have as much reason to suppose the passage which asserts that some will come forth to the "resurrection of damnation," will prove true as the other.

I admit, if these passages all relate to one event, that there is a palpable contradiction in them; and this would destroy all just grounds of belief in either. You will recollect the proposition laid down in the introduction of this discourse, and the consequence deduced from it; and you will, I think be rather inclined to the belief that one of Christ's expressions has been misunderstood and misapplied, rather than that he contradicted his own assertions. Let us then endeavor to reconcile these seeming contradictions; and thus wrest from the hands of infidels one of the weapons which they have long wielded against Christianity.

Our Saviour's words which we are now considering, are evidently a quotation from the prophet Daniel, contained in the last chapter of his prophecy, verse second. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The prophet introduces these words by saying, "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Christ, in the 24th of Matthew quoted this expression of the prophet, and declared it should be fulfilled during the then present generation; and the prophet himself fixes the time of the accomplishment of these predictions in language too plain to be easily misunderstod. After having been directed to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end;" and after the inquiry had been made, "how long shall it be to the end of these wonders? he heard the man which stood upon the waters of the river, swear "by him that liveth forever, that it shall be *for a time*, times, and an half; and when he shall *have accomplished* to scatter the power of the holy *people*, all these things shall be finished."

The time when "the power of the holy people" was scattered, is too well understood to need any illustration; and if, as acknowledged on all hands, our Saviour, in the words I am considering, quoted the language of the prophet; and further, if Daniel fixed the true time for the accomplishment of his predictions, it is plain, that Christ could not have alluded to the general and literal resurrection of all men from the dead; an event which is yet future.

Let us now, for a moment, attend to the connexion in which these words of the Redeemer are found. In verse 25 he says,—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God; and they that hear shall live." All commentators are agreed in referring these wor to a moral resurrection, which should take place when the kingdom of God should come with power; and when, by the preaching of the gospel, those who were dead in sin should hear the voice of Christ, warning and inviting them, and those who heard, or listened as it is more properly rendered, should live; i. e. sh uld obtain and enjoy spiritual, and eternal life. Jesus then proceeds to say, that the Father had given him "to have life in himself," and therefore he could impart the life he had promised to believers; and also, that he had received authority to "execute judgement" on those who should not obey. He then, in effect, repeats what he had before said,—renews the assurance that those who should listen, or obey, should receive life through him; and proceeds to poiut out the consequences to those who should refuse to hear or obey him in the gospel; and says they shall come forth "unto the resurrection of damnation," or, as it is rendered by Wakefield," to a resurrection of punishment;" *which is the* same as to say they should be punish-

ed for their sins, and their rejection of him and his gospel.

Thus we see that this passage can be reconciled, and in fact, that its connexion and all other circumstances, require it should be reconciled with the obvious meaning of the other expressions quoted from the language of our Saviour and the apostle. But can those other expressions be reconciled with the meaning usually attached to the one we have considered! We think not; and the reason why they cannot is found in the connexion in which they stand. It will be recollected that the words of Christ, which have been cited to prove the condition of man in the resurrection were spoken in answer to a question proposed by the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection; and in stating their question to Jesus, they mention persons who are literally dead; nothing therefore but a literal resurrection from the dead can be implied from this question and the answer given it by Christ. Paul, in the connexion of the words quoted from him, was also writing of those who were literally dead; and he shows shat unless the dead rise, the whole gospel plan is vain; & those who have fallen asleep, i. e. who have died a natural death are perished, or dead forever. In short all the ingenuity of man, will not be sufficient to show that these passages do, or can relate to a figurative or moral resurrection.

Here then we rest. On this eternal rock we ground our faith, in the fullest confidence that the "foundation of God standeth sure." And we feel the strongest assurance, that, as God has been pleased to reveal the doctrine of the resurrection of all who die in Adam, to a state of incorruption, immortality, and glory; and as he has illustrated this truth by raising Jesus Christ, the head of every man from the dead, he has not revealed, in any part of the scriptures of truth, any principle or doctrine contrary to this.

SERMON.—*No.* 4.

THE DOCTRINE UNPROFITABLE.

III. 9.—"Be not carried about with divers and
e doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart
ablished with grace; not with meats, which have
ofited them that have been exercised therein."

, in his best earthly estate, is a frail, im-
: creature. Liable to accidents, exposed
gers, and subjected to the changes and
udes of this unstable world, while he finds
if rightly improved, to promote his happi-
he also meets with many circumstances
are calculated to interrupt, if not to destroy
ppiness of life. Such is the constitution
natures, and such the principles implanted
us by the God of nature, that we natural-
necessarily embrace, and cleave to, what-
e think will give us happiness; and as
lly shun every thing which we believe will
contrary tendency. Human happiness
ts, not only in exemption from positive
nd the enjoyment of present real good, but
in the anticipation of future, and greater
and we fondly cherish all those principles
hold out to us the pleasure or encourage
us the hope of future blessings.
all the principles which tend to inspire us
hopes of future happiness, there are none
ich so great relation as those of
n. Religion alone, gives us an honest
d intimates expressly "a man," and "some

in some form or other, it is embraced and cherished by all the nations of the earth. As the principles of doctrine which are supposed to constitute religion, even the Christian religion, are various, and in many instances contradictory, so also the grounds on which they are embraced by different individuals are very different. Some continue through life to cherish the principles instilled into their minds in childhood and youth, without ever allowing themselves to doubt their truth, or examine the evidence on which they are founded. Others, in maturer years, embrace that form of faith which is most popular in the region where they live, and which they imagine best calculated to promote their respectability in life; and these seldom trouble themselves to ascertain whether their doctrine is true or false, so long as it answers their purpose, by promoting their popularity in the world. There are others, and we hope the number not small, who adopt a particular system of faith from a full and firm conviction of its truth; and in such we generally discover the influence of their religion on their lives and conduct. There is still another class, who appear to have embraced a particular system, and who continue to adhere to it from a conviction, not of its truth, but of its necessity to their future and eternal welfare. This is particularly the case in relation to the doctrine of endless condemnation and woe; and there are many who believe, or profess to believe, that, however firm may be the faith of a person in God and Christ,—however he may exercise love to them and his fellow men, and however he may trust in God for his eternal salvation, if he have not a belief that he will render some portion of his children eternally wretched, his faith and hope are entirely vain, and he is not entitled to the ap-

pellation or character of a Christian. Indeed, many appear to think, that without a belief in this sentiment, there can be neither fear nor love to God, or the least degree of true piety in the heart. Hence we frequently hear the assertion, that it is safer to believe in endless punishment, than in universal holiness and happiness.

We are not authorized to condemn any one on account of his religious sentiments; and we ought not to indulge in feelings of hardness towards any on account of a difference of opinion on this subject; especially such as are evidently honest and sincere in their belief. But we must be permitted to examine for ourselves, and bring every principle of doctrine to the test of scripture and reason; and it is our duty to regard the apostolic injunction, to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The doctrine of endless punishment, which has so long and generally prevailed in the Christian world, has already, as is conceived, been shown to be contrary to reason, opposed to all the acknowledged attributes and perfections of God, and unsupported by scripture. What now remains, in relation to this doctrine, is to show, that it is unnecessary, and entirely useless; and that neither the doctrine, nor a belief in it is calculated to benefit any being in the universe.

In order that we may investigate the subject understandingly, we will consider more fully than has yet been done the nature and design of punishment. Punishment is the infliction of pain, either corporeal or mental, for some criminal act, or neglect of duty; and intended for the production of some good as its consequence; otherwise the infliction of it is cruelty, barbarity, or revenge. In the infliction of punishment by *human governments*, the object is fourfold. 1.

The reformation of the offender, or person receiving the punishment. 2. To put it out of the power of the offender to be guilty of a repetition of his crime. 3. To serve as an example or warning to others. 4. For the security of the government. As the latter of these objects is incidental to human governments in consequence of their imperfection and weakness, and as it cannot apply to the divine government in which no such imperfection or weakness exists, no further remarks on this particular can be necessary; we may therefore confine our inquiries to the three first mentioned objects of punishment; and it will be our object to ascertain, if possible, whether either of these requires the infliction of interminable torment.

1. We will consider endless punishment with reference to the reformation of the offender, or individual doomed to endure this punishment.—That this is the first, the great and the leading object of all punishment, whether inflicted by human or divine authority, is a proposition too obviously true to be denied; and it has been shown in a former discourse, that whenever, on this ground, the good of any individual required the infliction of punishment, the mercy, as well as the justice of God, would inflict it. The question then arises, does the reformation, and consequent good of the sinner require that he should be punished eternally? or, will this punishment effect his reformation? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then we shall be able to discover the goodness of God in the infliction of endless torment, even to those who are its subjects. But where is the person so blind as not to discover at once the impropriety and absurdity of this supposition? In fact, the only ground on which inter-

minable punishment can be sustained, is interminable sin; and it is therefore a most plain contradiction in terms to say that it will be inflicted for the benefit of the sinner; for no benefit can possibly be received or enjoyed by him while his suffering continues. Will it be contended that God designs it for the reformation of the sinner? Impossible; for if this be the case, and the sinner's obstinacy prevents its intended effect, then it is evident the design of God will be eternally frustrated; and after all, the infliction of the punishment do no good to the sufferer. This supposition would therefore be an impeachment, not only of the mercy, but also of the wisdom of God; for to say that his purpose in what he does will not be accomplished, is only to say, in other words, he lacks wisdom in adapting his means to their desired ends.

2. The next object of the punishment of offenders against either the laws of God or man which we shall consider, is that of putting it out of their power to be guilty of a repetition of their crimes. In human governments, the infliction of capital punishment has this end in view, as well as to serve as an example to others. When an individual becomes so hardened in iniquity, as wilfully and malevolently to destroy the life of a fellow being, no pledge which he can give, or which can be given for him by others, can be sufficient to assure community that he will not, when a like provocation occurs, or temptation assails him, be guilty of repeating his atrocious crime; and consequently, public safety is supposed to require his death. Some, I am aware, believe the death of the murderer and the traitor to be necessary to make satisfaction to the violated laws of the country. But how, I ask, is this effected by the putting to death of the offender? The murdered father is not restored

to his family, nor the son to his parent, by the execution of the murderer; neither can it be said that the broken law is so restored that there has been no violation of it. Although many are opposed to the infliction of capital punishment for any crime, even for the accomplishment of this desirable object, it is readily admitted that this object is obtained when the punishment is inflicted; for the guilty person being dead, is no longer a subject to human laws, neither has he power to violate them.

But will this reasoning apply to the divine government? and to the infliction of endless punishment in the future and immortal state of existence? Can it be necessary under the administration of a perfect government? and will it accomplish this particular object of punishment? Without the least hesitation we answer all these questions in the negative; and I will now give the reasons for thus answering. Had those who are appointed to administer human laws the power of changing the hearts of criminals; and could they implant within them a love to God and their fellow men, together with a sacred regard for justice and the rights of others; and could they so search the heart as to know that the person so changed would continue through life, a good and peaceable member of society, and that he would never again repeat his crimes, or violate the laws of his country, it would be the height of cruelty, not only to the convicted person, but to his relatives and friends, to put him to death. And does not the Almighty possess all this power? Cannot he who formed the heart, and who holds it in his own hand, change it as he pleases! and can he not infallibly know whether the change so wrought is effectual and perfect?—But admitting it would be inconsistent with the

established principles of the divine government, for God so to exercise his sovereign power as to effect this change, would not infinite mercy prompt to annihilation rather than the infliction of ceaseless torments? Non-existence, certainly *cannot* offend; and it cannot be denied but this object would be as effectually gained by striking the guilty from existence, as by perpetuating their lives, their guilt and sufferings to eternity. And who, I ask, would not infinitely prefer annihilation to an eternity of wretchedness and hopeless despair?

As the particular we are now considering is one of importance, we will go still further, and inquire, will the infliction of endless punishment on the sinner prevent his continuance in sin, or a repetition of his iniquities? If this effect should be produced, the punishment would be remedial; and when the purpose for which it is inflicted shall be accomplished, and the sufferer cease to deserve further pain, punishment must of necessity cease; and any longer continuance of it would be cruelty, injustice and revenge. You will bear in mind the proposition which has already been laid down, that in order to establish the doctrine of endless misery, the endless continuance of sin is indispensible; and from this proposition, and the remarks already made it is obvious that the infliction of such punishment will not, and cannot accomplish the object now under consideration.

I will now proceed yet further, and show that endless punishment, instead of accomplishing this object, must necessarily and eternally frustrate it, and render its attainment impossible, even to God himself. Man, in a future and immortal state of existence will be as much dependent on God as he is in this life; and consequently as much a subject of his moral govern-

ment, and under as strong obligations to obey him as he is now; and we have no reason to believe that the requirements of the law of God will be changed, so far at least, as they relate to the duties which man owes to his Maker. This law requires love, undivided and perfect love from all men; and this love is produced and called into exercise in the creature, by the manifestation of the love and goodness of God. Did our heavenly Father possess no love for his children, or should he never manifest that love to them, it would be morally impossible for them to love him; and this is the only ground on which he requires us to love him. Search the whole volume of divine inspiration,—examine the testimony of all the prophets, of Christ, and his apostles,—consider the gracious promises and merciful invitations of the gospel,—contemplate the glorious displays of divine goodness and parental love in all the works of creation, and the dealings of Providence towards all creatures; and then say, is it not for these you love your adorable Creator? In a word, do we not "love him because he first loved us?" Let us, however, for a moment reverse this scene; and let us suppose that when we perused the sacred pages, instead of reading "God is love," we should read he is unmixed and eternal hatred,—instead of the assertion "the Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works," we should find it declared, he has no goodness, and that his *cruelties* are over all his works;—suppose in the language of the prophets or apostles we should be told he has appointed us to unending wrath—that he has pleasure in the unrighteousness and death of sinners, and that it is not his will to have them come unto the knowledge of the truth and be saved;—suppose in reading the invitations and promises extended to us in the gospel, we should find language like the

following—look unto me, and be ye *damned* all ye ends of the earth; ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and ye shall have no milk nor wine; come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and ye shall find no rest; take my yoke upon you, for it is grievous, and my burden is heavy; in cursing I will curse thee, and in thy seed all the families of the earth shall be cursed; suppose that in the organization of our bodies, all our senses had been so constituted as to be sources of constant pain and distress; that all the objects, with which we are surrounded were disgustful; and that all the dealings of Providence towards us were calculated to deprive us of what little happiness and enjoyment our own ability could procure for ourselves;—suppose all this, and then ask, can I obey, from the heart, the commands of such a being? Can I love him with all my heart, soul, mind and strength?—Can I be reconciled to him, and his moral government? and can I repose unshaken trust and confidence in him? you will at once discover that these things would be morally and utterly impossible.

Let us now apply this reasoning directly to our subject. It has already been observed that man will eternally remain a subject of the moral government of God, and under obligation to obey him. This will be admitted by the most strenuous advocates for the doctrine of endless punishment; for whenever the obligation of obedience ceases, on the part of man, he will cease to be a subject of punishment for disobedience. We have been taught, (and correctly too, if the doctrine in question be true,) that when an individual is consigned to this state of punishment, he is not only removed beyond the reach of God's mercy, but entirely divested of hope; that he

knows his condition is irrevocably fixed; and that when millions on millions of ages shall have rolled away, his sufferings will be no nearer a termination than when they first began. Contemplate, my friendly hearers, for a moment, the situation of a hapless fellow mortal, placed in this condition by the sovereign of the universe, cast off forever from the presence and favor of God,—tossing continually on the billows of unmingled wrath, in regions where

"Tempests of angry fire shall roll,
To blast the rebel worm;
And beat upon his naked soul,
In one eternal storm;"

with no companions but devils and damned spirits,—hearing no sounds but those of mingled lamentations, groans and curses,—continually tormented by the "stores of vengeance" which the Almighty has prepared, consisting of

"Eternal plagues, and heavy chains,
Tormenting racks and fiery coals,
And darts t' inflict immortal pains,
Dip't in the blood of damned souls;"

suffering all the bodily pain and mental agony he is capable of enduring, yet waiting "for fiercer pains,"—the command of the law continually sounding in his astounded ears, as if uttered by the united voices of ten thousand thunders, saying, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;" is it possible for him to obey this command? Can he behold with any other emotions than those of horror and perfect hatred, that being from whom he knows he shall eternally receive nothing but unmerciful, and unmitigating vengeance? It is impossible. But could we admit the possibility of obedience; and that love

to God could be exercised by a being in this condition; let it be remembered, the moment love should be produced and brought into exercise, that moment disobedience must cease, and suffering come to an end.

Nothing further can be necessary to show, that, so far as punishment is calculated to prevent the continuance of sin, or a repetition of transgression, the infliction of endless punishment must necessarily fail of accomplishing this object, and not only fail, but with an almighty power, and a resistless energy, it would perpetuate sin to the wasteless ages of eternity, by placing its subjects in a condition where they would be irresistibly impelled to hate God so long as he exists.

3. We now come to a consideration of the only remaining object of punishment, which is, that it may serve as an example or warning to others. It cannot be said that endless punishment, in a future and unseen state of existence, is an example to mankind in this life; for they cannot see it, neither do they know it is inflicted; and consequently it can be no example to them; it therefore follows, that if it be necessary for an example, it must be either to those in a similar condition, i. e. such as are in hell; or else it must be to the holy and beautiful inhabitants of heaven, who are in possession of "fulness of joy," and "pleasures forevermore." But can it do any good as an example, to such as are consigned to remediless woe? Can it be of any possible advantage to them? Will they be reformed or deterred from a continuance in sin by a view of the ceaseless torments of their fellow creatures? This will not be pretended; and the admission that this effect would be produced, would shake the doctrine of endless torment to its very foundation. It *follows* then, if the infliction of this

punishment be necessary as an example, it must be to the angels and saints in heaven. Here let us inquire, are the pure and holy dwellers in heaven, who have been sanctified, purified from all sin, and every sinful propensity, liable to fall into transgression unless they eternally behold the sin and misery of some of their fellow beings? This is a subject which we can bring home to our feelings and understandings; and I will now ask you, fathers and mothers, will a view of the interminable tortures and hopeless despair of your own beloved offspring be necessary to perfect your love to God in heaven, and to secure your continued obedience to him? will you be in danger of forgetting all his mercies to you, and of exercising hatred or ingratitude to him unless he should eternally exclude some of your dear children from the joys of his kingdom? Children, must you behold the venerated authors of your earthly existence—the kind guardians of your infancy, childhood and youth, and the friends and advisers of your maturer years interminably wretched, before you can feel secure of your own immortal happiness?—Husbands and wives must you see the faithful and affectionate companions of your bosoms rolling in liquid flames, and writing in agony unutterable in order to assure yourselves that you, when admitted to the paradise of God, shall not fall away from love, gratitude and obedience to your eternal benefactor, and unchanging friend? You will not, you cannot say these things will be necessary; on the contrary, you must be convinced, that if any thing can destroy the happiness of heaven, and seduce the blessed from their allegiance to God it would be such scenes as have been, though faintly, described; and I now ask, of what possible advantage can the infliction

of ceaseless torments, as an example or warning, afford to any being in the universe?

Perhaps it will be replied that there has been sin in heaven; that the devil was once an angel of light and glory; but he transgressed, and involved many other angels in his rebellion and guilt; and what has once transpired may again take place; that unless an example is set before them, other angels and blessed spirits may fall from their purity, and also become devils. I am fully aware that this opinion respecting the origin of sin, and that the devil was once a pure and holy angel prevails very extensively among professing Christians; and has become somewhat venerable for its age, and respectable on account of the high standing of those divines who have been its advocates. Without spending time and strength to give this opinion a particular investigation, or to point out the numerous absurdities embraced in it, I will simply observe, that it rests entirely on human authority; and that one passage from the volume of divine inspiration cannot be adduced in its support.

We have now considered every object for which punishment, properly so called, can be inflicted by any authority, whether human or divine; and we have seen that endless punishment is entirely unnecessary for the accomplishment of either of these objects. It has been shown, first, that the infliction of it cannot effect the reformation and consequent good of those on whom it is inflicted; secondly, that supposing this to be the penalty of the divine law, the infliction of this penalty, instead of answering the design of the law as a preventative of sin, would absolutely thwart this design, by placing those who should suffer the penalty in a situation where they cannot but continue their rebellion; and

thirdly, that as an example or warning to ot it is totally unnecessary and useless. It has been shown, in a former discourse, that the tice and glory of God, so far from requiring punishment, were equally, with his mercy, posed to it; and hence it follows, that it ca of no possible use or benefit, either to God, any portion of the intelligent creation.

We will next consider the various ground which a belief in this doctrine has been dee necessary. And;—

1. A belief in this doctrine has been co ered necessary to the production of genuine ety in the heart; and in support of this opi we are frequently told that all who have been distinguished for piety have been believe endless punishment. Although we wish not t tract in the least degree from the merit of any o opposers, or the believers in a doctrine cont to what we believe to be true, yet we cannot mit the truth of this assertion. We believe characters for piety of the eminent fathers embraced and defended the doctrine of the mate holiness and happiness of all men in earliest ages of Christianity, and of many, in Europe and America, since the reformation, have believed this doctrine, will not suffer by a c parison with those of any individuals, in any ag nation, who have embraced the opposite sentim I repeat, we wish not to deny the eminent p of many who have believed, and who now beli the doctrine of endless punishment; but we c not believe their piety to be the exclusive frui a belief in this doctrine.

For the purpose of arriving at a correct c clusion on this point, we will endeavor to as tain in what true piety consists; and having certained this, we shall be better qualified

determine satisfactorily to our minds, what sentiments will be best calculated to produce it in the heart. I readily admit, if piety consists in certain mysterious and inexpressible operations of the mind,—in the constant dread of misery in the world to come,—in the observance of "times and seasons,"—in attendance on the outward ordinances of the gospel, and in the exercise of a self righteous spirit, that a belief in the impartial grace of God is not so well adapted to its promotion as a contrary sentiment. "Piety," says a learned and well known orthodox writer, "consists in a firm belief, and in right conceptions of the being, perfections, and providence of God; with suitable affections to him, resemblance of his moral perfections, and a constant obedience to his will." A very brief consideration of the several particulars constituting piety, as they are laid down by this writer, will, I think, be sufficient to convince every unprejudiced mind, that a belief in endless sin and misery is not necessary to its production in the human heart, or its exercise in life.

A sentiment in accordance with all we learn from nature of the character of God, must be altogether more conducive to a belief in his being, perfections, and providence, than one of a contrary character; and all the conceptions which we form of the being, character or providence of him who teaches us through the medium of his works, which contradict these teachings, must be erroneous; and there can be no doubt, but the character ascribed to the Parent of creation, by popular theology, has been a prolific source of infidelity. It can require no argument to convince any candid individual, that a belief in the impartial goodness of God to all his creatures, *will be more* productive of "suitable affections to

him" than a belief which represents him as the eternal enemy of a portion of his rational offspring. "Resemblance of his moral perfections" is another constituent principle of piety; and it is submitted to every one to decide whether a person who should pursue the course of conduct in his own family by making a part of his children as happy as possible, and the remainder who are no more guilty than the others, as miserable as his ability would permit, without the least design of doing them any final good, which we are taught God will pursue towards his children, would deserve the appellation of a pious man. Such a parent must be considered by all, a monster of partiality and cruelty. "A constant obedience to his will" is the remaining principle of true piety. Now if we admit that the obedience which God requires, is such as is yielded from a fear of punishment, and a dread of relentless vengeance, then I admit a belief in endless wrath is necessary to produce it; but if it be an obedience flowing from filial love and veneration, in which the warm affections of the heart are engaged, I shall contend that of all sentiments which have ever prevailed in the world, that of universal benevolence is best calculated to produce it. We cheerfully repeat the admission already made, that many believers in endless punishment have been eminently pious; but we believe their piety to have been the fruit of love to God in their hearts, rather than of a dread of his eternal wrath; and we therefore cannot think a belief in this unmerciful doctrine necessary to the production or promotion of piety in the world.

2. This doctrine is deemed necessary to produce revivals of religion, and for the conversion of sinners. On this point I should be dis-

posed to say nothing, were it not for the frequent assertions of our opposers, that under the preaching of the doctrine of impartial grace there are no revivals or conversions. We readily admit that those violent excitements of the passions and feelings, which, in late years, have been miscalled reformations, and revivals of religion, are not produced by the preaching of the doctrine we profess; and we devoutly pray God they never may be. We are not opposed to revivals of pure and undefiled religion; on the contrary we sincerely rejoice, whenever we see the pure spirit of Christ, and of the gospel reviving in the hearts, and manifesting itself in the lives of our fellow-creatures; but we remember this is a spirit of love, of peace, joy, charity, and of consolation, and not of contention, prejudice, turmoil, spiritual pride, enthusiasm or despondency. How different are those scenes, which at the present day are called revivals, from the revivals recorded in the scriptures; and how different also, is the preaching by which these are produced from that of the inspired apostles.—In the second chapter of Acts, we have an account of the most remarkable revival recorded on the pages of history, either sacred or profane. This revival was effected by the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost; and its fruits were no less than three thousand souls converted to God. But we search in vain for such language in the discourse of Peter on this occasion, as we hear from the lips of what are called revival preachers at this day. In the whole sermon we hear not one word said about an angry God, an endless hell, or even about punishment of any description; but he preached the resurrection of Christ, the kingdom and dominion of *the Redeemer*; and when in view of their own

ingratitude and hardness of heart, his he
felt the stings of an accusing conscience,
inquired of him what they should do, he
them to repent, and embrace the Saviour b
ing baptized in his name; and as an induce
to repentance, he proclaimed to them the
ises, not the threatnings of God, and urged
to save themselves from that "untoward ge
tion;" but gave them no intimation th
was necessary to save themselves from fi
and endless burnings in hell. These con
we find, continued firm and steadfast "i
apostles' doctrine and fellowship;" but
few of the subjects of modern revivals are
who do not soon turn back to the "weak an
garly elements of the world, and "become
fold more the child of hell" than before.

The conversion of sinners to God is
every Christian sincerely and ardently de
but we cannot believe such conversions a
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wrath; and for the purpose of illustratin
particular, we will notice what is denominat
process of the conviction and conversion of
ner. During periods of violent excitement
subject of religion, we often see persons re
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he is brought to consider himself a hell dese
and hell-doomed sinner, for whom God h
mercy in store; the best actions of his li
represented to him as heinous sins; he reme
the past with bitter, but unavailing sorrow
contemplates the future with indescribable d
he is told to pray to God, but he dare not a
it for fear his prayers will only sink him
in condemnation and woe; and when b

into this distressing situation, he is said to be under conviction, and in a hopeless way. But is he now safe? Has all his anguish done him any good? Not in the least; but he is told, that if it should please God to take him away in this condition, there is no hope of mercy for him, and he must lie down in unutterable and unending despair. When this state of mind has continued as long as is considered necessary, the minister who has been the cause of his conviction comes forward with a smiling countenance, proclaims to him the love of God and points him to the gracious promises of the gospel. Suddenly, his gloomy fears are succeeded by cheering hopes,& his despair by fulness of joy; and now he is said to be truly converted. But here a question arises, —what has converted him? his fear, or his hope? Most assuredly the latter; and hence, after all, it must be acknowledged that the love of God, a knowledge of his glorious purpose in the redemption of man, and the hopes inspired by this knowledge, can alone effect genuine conversion; and I never have conversed with an experienced Christian on this subject, who has not told me, that when he first came into the enjoyment of the light and liberty of the gospel he beheld an infinite fullnes, an ample sufficiency in the grace of God for the whole world; and that at this time, the thought of the endless suffering of any one of his fellow sinners never entered his mind. The inference from all this, appears plain and irresistible,—that a belief in endless punishment is not necessary, either for the purpose of promoting revivals of true religion, or for the conversion of sinners to God.

3. Much is said of the licentious tendency of Universalism; and the most strenuous exertions are made to induce a belief that this doctrine re-

moves all the restraints which religion imposes on the corrupt passions of the human heart, and opens wide the flood-gate of iniquity and sin; and hence the necessity of a belief in the opposite doctrine, as a barrier against vice, and a preventive of transgression, and crime of every description. But let us inquire, has this belief prevented crimes in the world? This inquiry is important, but it is painful. It is truly painful to speak of the wickedness and the crimes of professing christians and gladly would we cast a veil of impervious darkness, and everlasting oblivion over some parts of the history of past ages, would justice to the cause of divine truth permit it to be done; but it will not; and we are compelled, in self-defence to meet our opposers on their own ground. And whilst we contemplate the atrocious crimes perpetrated by persons calling themselves the followers of Jesus, let us humbly pray God to preserve us from all temptations to evil.

Passing over the events narrated in Eclesiastical history previous to the period of the Reformation, during which time rivers of human blood were shed in wars which were waged by Christians against Pagans on account of what was called religion; it is impossible to contemplate, without emotions of horror, the crimes which have been perpetrated since that period, by those who professed to be actuated in their conduct by a regard for the religion of Jesus.—In Holland and the Netherlands, while these States were under the domion of Spain, from fifty to one hundred thousand Protestants suffered death, for their religion. On the 24th of August, 1572, commenced in France the horrid massacre of St. Bartholomew, in which no less than 70,000 inhabitants were murdered in cold blood by the

Catholics. Afterwards, in the same century, during the reign of Louis XIV. a persecution, attended with still greater cruelty, was commenced and carried on for a considerable time against the Protestants; in which many thousands of all ages, sexes, and conditions, suffered all which the unfeeling barbarity of their persecutors could inflict upon them. The soils of England, Ireland, Scotland, Portugal, Italy, Flanders, Sicily and Sardinia, have also been stained with the blood of Christian Martyrs. In Spain, between the years 1481 and 1820, no less than 34,658 were burnt alive; 18,049 burnt in effigy; 288,-214 condemned to the gallies or prison for life; and the estates of 291,450 were confiscated, all for their religious belief; making a total of 632,-371 victims to what was called the *Holy Inquisition.* In 1552, John Calvin of Geneva, caused Michael Servetus, a learned and pious divine to be burnt alive at a slow fire made of green wood, on a charge of heresy. In 1555, Latimer, Ridley, Rogers, Philpot, and many other eminent divines were burnt, by order of Mary, queen of England. These most attrocious crimes, together with others of the same nature, too numerous to mention at this time, were all committed by zealous believers in endless punishment; and we are irresistibly impelled to the inquiry, would not a contrary belief have prevented these crimes? Had Queen Mary, John Calvin, the Popes of Rome, and the directors of the Inquisition believed that those whom they caused to suffer death were, equally with themselves, objects of the unchanging love of God, and that he would finally purify them from all error, and constitute them joint heirs with themselves to an immortal inheritance in heaven, could they have exercised such unfeeling cruelty towards them?

I leave it with you, my hearers, to say, whether the doctrine of endless, unmerciful punishment can be cleared from the charge of all this wickedness and bloodshed.

But to come nearer home, and to circumstances with which we are better acquainted ;—Was it a belief in universal salvation which caused that spirit of persecution in England, that drove our ancestors from the home and the graves of their fathers ; and compelled them to seek for safety and peace in a far distant and wilderness land ? Did a heart-felt belief in this doctrine induce these same "pilgrim fathers," as soon as they themselves were freed from oppression, to hang witches, whip Baptists, and banish Quakers ? and does this belief produce that spiritual pride, and wicked intolerance which are so conspicuous in the conduct of the leading orthododox clergy of the present day ? Let experience and common sense answer these questions.

There is another fact, which is of so much importance in the illustration of our subject, that I cannot pass it over in silence. In the autumn of 1824; the state prison in the city of New York contained SIX HUNDRED AND TWEETY-THREE convicts. At this time, a clergyman, accompanied by one of the overseers of the prison, visited this immense reservoir of guilt, for the sole purpose of ascertaining the religious sentiments of its wretched inmates. Each prisoner was interrogated on this point ; and *every one* declared himself a believer in the doctrine of *endless punishment !* Whenever a Universalist is detected in any crime, our opposers are extremely apt to exclaim,—see now, the fruits of Universalism,—nothing better could be reasonably expected from a person professing and believing such a *licentious* doctrine. But does not the fact now

mentioned furnish us with a sufficient answer to all such expressions? Have we not an equal right with our opponents to say, that all the various grades of crime for which these prisoners were then suffering a just punishment, are the legitimate fruits of *their* doctrine? But we do not wish to retort upon them their own uncharitable assertions, nor to return "railing for railing;" and that cause must be weak indeed, which requires a resort to such measures for its support. Neither has this fact been introduced for the purpose of producing an impression that we believe the natural tendency of their doctrine is to all manner of crime; although we do believe it tends directly and naturally to the exercise of cruelty, and a persecuting spirit; but I have introduced it to show that a belief in the doctrine in question, does not prevent crime; and that, as a denomination, we are not more wicked than others of a contrary belief.

You will very naturally inquire, how can these things be so? How is it possible for those who believe that one eternal retribution awaits the sinner for the crimes of this life, to set at defiance the laws of God and man, and rush forward in their sinful course, which according to their own belief, will consign them to remediless woe? We can only answer this question by saying, that amongst all the professed believers in this doctrine, there are none who believe it for themselves, but for others. It is some poor abandoned wretch, some wicked neighbor, and not myself, whom God will render eternally miserable. A few, we have seen, from time to time have brought this cruel sentiment home to themselves; and have believed they should suffer this punishment. But what have been the consequences of such belief? Reason has fled; despair has vei-

zed their senses; and these miserable victims have wandered as roving maniacs through the world, or ended their wretched lives with their own hands. There is another circumstance which will account for the little effect a belief in this doctrine has in restraining vice. All who believe it, believe also, there is a way of avoiding that punishment which they are taught awaits them, and which is deserved for the sins of this life. They believe if they repent, any time previous to death, all merited punishment will be remitted to them; and this they are determined to do, sometime before the lamp of life expires; and hence they continully flatter themselves they shall escape the just desert of their crimes.

In conclusion I would observe, it is not a belief in any particular doctrine which is calculated, in itself, to prevent sin. Nothing but a prevailing love to God in the heart, and a sincere veneration for his parental character and authority can produce this effect; and it is obvious that the doctrine which is best adapted to the production of this love and veneration must naturally have the greatest tendency to prevent evil, and to promote true religion in the world. May God grant each of us a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; and make us all wise unto salvation.—Amen.

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